

School of Theology at Claremont



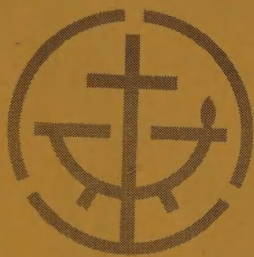
1001 1357291



K
518

LIBRARY
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY
817 West 34th Street
Los Angeles 7, Calif.

HARVEY M. SHELLEY
PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER
5513 Larchwood Avenue
Los Angeles, Calif.



Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

DIVINE VOCATION IN HUMAN LIFE

"
DIVINE VOCATION
IN HUMAN LIFE

BT
165
R6

BY

JAMES ALEX. ROBERTSON, M.A., D.D.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND
THEOLOGY, UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, ABERDEEN;
AUTHOR OF "THE SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE OF JESUS," "THE
HIDDEN ROMANCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT," "CONCERNING
THE SOUL," ETC.

NEW  YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

DIVINE VOCATION IN HUMAN LIFE

— uc —

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
E. A. R.

334738

“Let not him that seeketh cease from his search until he find, and when he finds he shall wonder; wondering, he shall reach the Kingdom, and when he reaches the Kingdom he shall have rest.”

Oxyrhynchus Logion

Preface

IN the reign of Nero there lived in Rome a lame, broken and sickly slave, who by and by obtained his freedom, and became perhaps the brightest light of one of the noblest philosophies of the ancient world. Living a life of extreme poverty, practically unattended, his sole earthly possessions a bed, a pipkin, and an earthen lamp, Epictetus the Stoic expounded his austere but lofty teaching to the world. There is a pathos and sublimity about the doctrine to which he gave frequent expression. It is man's true honour to be a *διάκονος*—a slave in the household—of God. He held himself to be no freedman. The slave of Epaphroditus had become the slave of God. Nay, even while he served the Roman citizen, it was his conviction that his real Taskmaster was God.

The doctrine is a vivid searchlight flung on the mystery of life. Every man, whether he is conscious of it or not, is, or is meant to be, a fragment of the infinite purpose and plan of God. What does it mean to view one's daily task "*sub quadam specie aeternitatis*," to hear the call of the Divine *Despotes*, and, as the *Theologia Germanica* puts it, to become "to the Eternal Goodness what his own right hand

Preface

is to a man" ? How shall we interpret vocation in life ?

To answer the question the studies brought together in this book make a fragmentary attempt. The book has grown out of occasional papers ; but they all gather round or converge upon this central theme. The first section of the book consists of chapters which lead up to, or prepare the way for, a discussion of the main theme, and may be omitted at the outset by any reader who wishes to pass immediately to that central subject. Chapter I discusses the moods of commonsense, the fundamental or primary attitudes of man to his world, attitudes, one or other of which lies behind every attempt to explain the world. They are the attitudes of acceptance, criticism, and wonder. And of these, wonder is held to be the right attitude of the soul to the world. It finds justification for itself in the fact that man as moral is a creature of two worlds, the higher of which furnishes the source and the sanction of all moral activity. Chapter II describes certain typical directions taken by the pilgrim soul of man in his endeavours to comprehend his world—the sense life, the life of the intellect, the æsthetic life, and the moral life. An endeavour is made to show how, while each may be espoused so wholeheartedly as to be in a sense a man's religion, yet the fullest religious life is found only when the life of moral activity passes over into the apprehension of life as a Divine Vocation. Chapter III proceeds to

Preface

indicate that it is not man alone who seeks : God is a Seeker too. He is immanent in His world, striving along the ways of evolution and revelation to incarnate Himself in humanity, making it His supreme purpose to establish a Community of souls in His own life—souls which He summons to co-operate with Him in the carrying out of His design.

In the central section of the book I take up the theme to which these earlier chapters lead—Divine Vocation, God's call to man to co-operate with Him in carrying out His plan. First, an endeavour is made to win a religious meaning for Vocation, by pressing the conception forward through ever widening spheres of significance—self, home, society, nation, commonwealth of nations, humanity, some great cause, until we reach a view of the conception in which it is seen as a Divine Summons or Call (Section II, Chapter II). Next, certain possible criticisms of the view are considered—the seeming heteronomy which it sets up, its conflict with the fact of evil, the question of degrees of value among vocations, and the problem of the lowlier vocations (Section II, Chap. II). Finally, in this second section (Chap. III) an attempt is made to build a pyramid of the main earthly vocations, by classifying them according to degrees of value, and also according to kind, whether practical, intellectual, or imaginative.

The last section of the book turns to the more inward aspects of the theme. If a man's vocation is a Divine Call, how, in the higher vocations, is the

Preface

Divine Voice actually heard? Is it purely subjective, arising out of the activity of the moral life, or is it the result of a real approach of God to man? The transition-way between morality and religion is discussed in order to emphasize the distinctive feature of the complete religious life, namely, that something is *given* to man by God (Section III, Chap. I). Then some ways of God's approach to man are considered—in the life of scientist, artist, and reformer (Section III, Chap. II). In a further chapter (Section III, Chap. III) we deal with the supreme ways of God's approach to man, in the religious intuition of mystic and prophet. And last of all a brief description is given of Jesus' consciousness of Vocation, as the summons to fulfil the supreme purpose of God on earth. This topic has been dealt with more fully by the writer in a former book, "The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus," to which these studies form a kind of *prolegomenon*.

The material used in the last two sections of the book formed the substance of a course of Lectures given under "The Russell Foundation" in Auburn Theological Seminary, U.S.A. (Sept., 1925).

Thanks are due to Sir George Paish, the Rev. R. W. Stewart, B.Sc., B.D., and my wife for much helpful criticism in the preparation of this book.

Aberdeen, 1925.

Contents

SECTION I

PRELIMINARY STUDIES

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE MOODS OF COMMON SENSE	15
II MAN'S SEARCH FOR UNION WITH REALITY	27
III GOD'S SEARCH FOR COMMUNION WITH MAN	49

SECTION II

VOCATION IN LIFE

I THE CONCEPTION OF VOCATION	81
II CRITICISM OF THE CONCEPTION	112
III THE PYRAMID OF VOCATION	145

SECTION III

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VOCATION

I FROM MORALITY TO RELIGION	175
II WAYS OF THE DIVINE APPROACH	197
III RELIGIOUS INTUITION	212
IV THE UTMOST FOR THE HIGHEST	235

SECTION I
PRELIMINARY STUDIES

- I THE MOODS OF COMMON SENSE
- II MAN'S SEARCH FOR UNION WITH REALITY
- III GOD'S SEARCH FOR COMMUNION WITH MAN

CHAPTER I

The Moods of Common Sense

“THERE are,” says Theodore Watts-Dunton, in a Preface to *Aylwin*, “two great impulses governing man, and probably not man only but the entire world of conscious life—the impulse of acceptance—the impulse to take unchallenged and for granted the phenomena of the outer world as they are, and the impulse to confront these phenomena with eyes of inquiry and wonder.” We should prefer to describe these impulses as three in number, for the way of inquiry may take either a downward or an upward course. Human contentment oscillates from its normal equilibrium, dragged now to the one side by spiritual hope, now to the other by spiritual fear. While therefore the common sense attitude to life is never a constant quantity, and cannot be precisely defined, we may characterise it as possessing these three typical moods—acceptance, criticism, wonder. All three are no doubt present in the normal mind; their proportions vary with the individual.

(I) ACCEPTANCE.

Behind these two latter moods of doubt and wonder we find a basal spiritual inertia. To the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

average man the adventure of life is a matter-of-fact affair. "This warm, kind world," ever present and engrossing, is the great reality for him. It is there, and he accepts it, refraining for the most part from asking it embarrassing questions. He was born into it : but that was not his concern. It was his nursery, accommodating itself—on the whole with patience, even indulgence—to his romantic castles of sand. These fell, of course ; but youth has a way of drying its tears, forgetting and beginning again. Later, it becomes his battle-ground : so at least the grown man heroically dubs it ; though the victory he fights for is common-place—merely to persuade Nature and Society to a policy of "live and let live." He wants to pass the time of his sojourning here in comfort ; to build a lodging-place in the wilderness ; to turn his station on the battle-plain into a kitchen garden ; and to make the rest of it, beyond the wall of his own self-interest, his pleasure-garden. He calls it "*this* life"—a phrase which perhaps carries within it the suggestion of another life. But this, the great Here and Now of waking experience, assaulting his senses in every moment of conscious existence, is for him *the* absorbing Reality. It stretches to the very horizon of his interest. He rounds it off perhaps with the haze of a few obstinate hopes and healthy superstitions. But the part they play is a more or less sub-conscious one. He is thirled to the "this"-ness of it all.

The Moods of Common Sense

This mood may vary from a dull acquiescence to a brave contentment, or even a riotous *joie de vivre*. No man has a right to ask or to answer the question, Is life worth living? until he has lived it; because we have no criterion whereby to judge life except life itself. And it is all to the credit of the sanity of common-sense that it is only in the exceptional case that the question ever becomes strident. We take life, and make, as we say, the best of it. But "making the best of it" is one of those unfortunate phrases which have lost their character by keeping company with cynics. What it means—seriously to make the best of it—is largely what we shall be concerned with in these pages. But to the mood of lethargic acquiescence it frequently means just living a hand-to-mouth existence—taking the cash, and letting the credit go. A somewhat more respectable form of this mood is that which regards life as something to be gone through with—a lesson, wholesome, but irksome. It may bore us, even to weariness. The result is that we are not much concerned one way or the other—faintly sorry yet mildly glad—at the approach of what we take to be a sleep that is sound enough. But this mood when coupled with joy may wear a quite attractive aspect. The tears that are for mortal things may not dissolve our contentment, but only give it a heroic note. We may say of the objects of our human interest that

Divine Vocation in Human Life

“the very reason why we love them is because they die.” We may say of ourselves, as the curtain drops, “to have lived is enough”; or perhaps—often quite truthfully—“more than we deserved.” Such are some of the aspects of the prevailing mood of spiritual inertia which is the possession of the average man—contentment with the show of things.¹

(2) CRITICISM, OR THE ANALYTIC TEMPER.

Wide-spread as it is, however, the mood of acceptance is probably never found in its purity. The commonsense world—of opinions, smoothed by life's sandy tritition; of everyday maxims, axioms, compromises, exposed a hundred times a day to the rude shocks and discords of harsh fact—does not always satisfy. It looks so adequate and self-explanatory at first sight. But sore vicissitude makes us wonder if this friend, on which we had leaned, was so worthy of our confidence after all. This present Reality proves unable to answer all our questions, and we resentfully tell it that it has betrayed us. Accepted opinions quarrel and refuse any longer to live in the same room with each other. The maxims in which we put such pathetic faith rudely desert us at the great cross-roads of

¹ W. E. Henley's "Out of the night that covers me" is scarcely an expression of this mood. It is rather a whistling to keep the courage up. It is the critical mood in a defiant temper.

The Moods of Common Sense

life, and we are fain to ask the way of the merest passing stranger. Our axioms turn out to be only pragmatistical hypotheses, which some day meet the instance where they will not work. The testing exception shatters the rule ; and we have to remould it on a more comprehensive scale. But always with a deepening suspicion. Experience becomes for us a thicket of compromises, which shift and dissolve, form and reform, as if in a mazy dream. May it not be a dream ? The fear of life awakes in the soul. Things are not what they seem. It is not the real that reaches us through the avenue of the senses. And these shadowy woods of compromise exhibit an endless, weary process, of growth contending with dissolution—new notions sprouting from the spent substance of the old, only to suffer a like fate in turn. And they have their roots, it seems, in a dusty chaos, characterized by the absence of life and meaning. Perhaps *this* is the Real—this debris of a dream that slowly crumbles into fragments. Are we too but bits of the dream ? Like Alice, we are troubled to think we may be only fancies in the dishevelled sleep of some snoring Red King. For when the dream proceeds a little way, we will certainly flit from it into the dark of Nothingness. And some day—when the Sleeper wakes—what will become of the dream ? Nay, what will become of the Sleeper ? For he, too, it seems, is part of his own dream !

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Out of that fear—if we may call it such,—out of that sense of disillusionment, have come all the pessimisms and materialisms of time. For the direction of every reading of the riddle of life has been determined in the first instance by the temper of the soul. Behind the pure enthusiasm of thought in the most passionless philosophy there ever lies some primary reaction of the soul to life. And in the instance of the critical temper it is the obsession of the soul by a conviction of the unreality of conscious life, its valuelessness, its lack of correspondence with the truth of things—if there be a truth of things. It is the detective temperament, or the temperament that is always anxious to lead the case for the prosecution. And its brief is that not only is our waking experience not the real, but it makes pretensions which Reality does not justify. “The man of wonder and romance is, to such a mind, a sentimentalist—one who is ‘always ready to react against the despotism of fact.’”¹ Not that such theories are the offspring of craven-heartedness. They are rather the vision of the world seen through the dry, bright eyes of the grey courage that is always schooling itself to learn the worst. And they have been cleared to see far—those eyes: but cleared only to see what such a despair of existence permits them to see. The eye of outward observation takes its orders always from the eye of the mind. And the

¹ M. Henri Martin, quoted by M. Arnold.

The Moods of Common Sense

eye of the mind is ever adjusted by the mood of the heart.¹

Can this mood of the heart be justified? We are looking now, not at the thought-systems in which the impulse has found utterance, but at the conviction itself—the conviction of a mind obsessed by the breaking up of the world of Appearance, whether it be the vague intermittent fear that visits the heart of the ordinarily contented, or the sad resignation of Omar, or this which has integrated itself into a philosophy of hopelessness. In the first place, who is this that is able to think the world of ordinary experience may be a vapoury dream? Is he a fragment of the dream? Can a drop amid the waters of the river be conscious of the river? How then could it come to possess the still less accessible surmise that the river's seeming unity and permanence is but illusion?² Nay, the fact that we can call it a dream, and the fact that we can be visited by the fear, proclaim us to be greater than the dream; proclaim also that the Reality of which our sense-experience is but a confused and disordered Appearance must be, not less, but greater than the Appearance. There is no sense of homelessness in the heart of the wild creature whose native woods provide the satisfaction for its every instinct and desire. There could be no home-sickness of the soul,

¹ Someone has said that the critic is the man who is never very sure whether it is a "fine day."

² cf. L. P. Jacks: "Alchemy of Thought," pp. 189ff.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

no pining for what is not, if its only home were a living dream in which it dwelt and moved, a fragment.

Further, what is the new-found "Reality," to which the soul, driven by the conviction of gloom, has pierced, and in which it finds its grey repose? How shall we regard this dusty chaos in which the forest of human life is rooted? When we have sought out the simple elements from which this so-called dream is built, are we any nearer the Real? A mixture of force and mass and fortuity: but what are these? Have they the satisfying marks of Reality about them? Are they not themselves abstractions of thought—gossamers left floating on the clear translucence of consciousness, after the mists of commonsense opinion have been expelled by the critical temper? Nor is it easy to see that what is but an abstraction of thought can be the source and cause of thought—that consciousness can be an effluvium given off by those gossamers. Rather, when consciousness flickers out, the gossamers must cease to be. Life would then indeed not only be a vain dream, but a mirage moving on the abyss of nothingness. The quest of analytical doubt defeats itself. Nothingness is Reality—a contradiction in terms.

(3) WONDER.

We might otherwise describe this critical impulse of the soul as an instinctive belief that the confusions

The Moods of Common Sense

and perplexities of the phenomenal world are unreal precisely because of their very variety, plurality, and fluidity; and that the nearer we get to a primal simplicity and rigidity and absence of differentiation, the nearer we get to the real. But when we look at the present result of the world-process, when we reflect that out of these primal force-nuclei has come that infinite complexus of the phenomenal world, we are driven to another conclusion. All the wonder of the world's age-long unfolding must have been there in promise in that *infra-sensible* "chaos" of undifferentiated simples. Then begins "the renascence of wonder" in the soul. In other words, we realize that the truth of the the long process of Becoming is that "*there never was any chaos*"; our dissection of matter has only resulted in an enrichment for finite thought of the world of spirit to which it belongs. The instinct for the simple as the Real is balanced in the human mind by another and a truer instinct—that we shall pierce behind the confusions and multiplicities of the phenomenal, not by breaking its complexities into simples, but by reaching up to higher unities and beyond them to an ultimate Unity where the contradictions and mere relativity of Appearance shall be ordered into a harmonious and perfectly integrated whole.

We cannot speak of "dream" and "appearance" unless we possess a standard of Truth and Reality

Divine Vocation in Human Life

by which we judge things so. And this Reality must be deeper and fuller and richer than all the infinite wonder and variety of Appearance. Yes, this "instinct for transcendence" is a truer instinct than that for disintegration—which is really the instinct for transcendence perverted. And this—the third characteristic mood of common-sense—wonder—is more persistent and more universal far than the gloomy conviction upon which the grey materialisms of human history have been built. It is as widespread as humanity itself. The urge of life has everywhere driven the spirit of man to seek for the real in some *super-sensible* region, which is the ground of all that appears.

This impulse of hope or wonder has been the source of all the optimisms and idealisms of human thought ; of all the religions of the soul. But apart from the philosophies which have been built to justify this hope, apart from the religions which have borne witness to an actually experienced contact with this transcendent world, we have one great witness to the presence and power of this impulse in human life which is nowhere gainsaid. That is the world of Morality. Prior to the problem of evil is the question, How have we ever come to see evil ? Why is man ever dissatisfied with the world as it is ? If he is the offspring of this world why does he not accept it ? Is this not a witness to the reality of a transcendent world ? Yes, it is more

The Moods of Common Sense

than a mere witness to its existence ; it reveals the deep-rooted assurance in the human soul as to the nature of the Reality behind Appearance. Already in the world of morality—in this spiritual region of action based on ideals—the soul feels itself in contact with something of greater worth than sense-appearance. And in the hour of uttermost obedience to the law of duty it is already scenting the infinite sea of Reality, already entering upon the conviction that the Ideal is the Real—where Truth, Beauty, Goodness are one. In religion this conviction becomes at length a spiritual experience.

But now, on glancing back over our description of those three moods of common sense, it will be observed that they have one feature in common. In each case the chief concern was to find rest in the Real. What the Real was for each was determined by the mood. In the case of the impulse of acceptance the Real was “this warm, kind world.” In the case of the critical impulse we found a primal chaotic abyss of force and fortuity to be a typical description of Reality. In the case of the impulse of wonder, the Real is the Super-sensible World-order—the ground of all appearance, above, beneath, around and interpenetrating it, and the Home of the human spirit.

Further, as to the power of the human spirit to know the truth of things, we may note that when the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

first attitude speaks of this life, and adds either that it believes there is no other, or that it does not know if there is another, we have the extreme form of Agnosticism. It is very different from the Agnosticism which frequently accompanies the second attitude. The great seekers in the ranks of analytic thought, when they have pushed their quest as near to grasping the primal Stuff as they can, have usually saved themselves from the self-defeat of analytic doubt, by acknowledging that their discovery still wears the taint of finite thought about it; that the Reality they have sought is still something other than that which they have found. They believe *that* it exists. But *what* it is they know not. The attitude of Wonder not only affirms that there is a Reality other than what appears but that it can be, and is, partly known. The seekers of hope declare that they have in a measure found Reality, partly by their own efforts to apprehend it—for it must be kin with the seeking mind, else knowledge could never begin to be at all; but also because—and here it is the voice of religious experience that speaks—the Great Reality has actively disclosed itself to them. For religion is the result not merely, nor even chiefly, of man's own striving rational and moral consciousness, but largely the result of a *response* on the part of the infinite spiritual Life of the Universe to the search of the human spirit.

CHAPTER II

Man's Search for Union with Reality

THERE are certain typical spheres of life, within one or other of which all the varied activities of man may be said to group themselves, the life of sense, the intellectual life, the life of art, of morality, of religion. The moods of commonsense, we have just suggested, all arise out of endeavours to find rest in the Real World. Every endeavour to live is an attempted pilgrimage towards Reality. And our object now is to determine in which of these spheres life finds its highest fulfilment.

At the very outset, however, it must be premised that these spheres of life do not form isolated and watertight compartments. Joy, Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Love, are not mutually exclusive aims in life, however much the devotees of each may strive to make them so. What is their relation to each other? Are they stages of the pilgrimage? If so, in what order of significance do we place them? And does the acceptance of the highest mean the repudiation of all the rest? Or is each of them a

Divine Vocation in Human Life

facet of life in some sense reflecting the whole? Is religion but a name for the soul's pilgrimage towards Reality, along whatsoever pathway it be pursued? What are we to say of the man who finds his religion in the sense life, or in science, or in art, or in social service? Must the name "Religion" be reserved for the summit of human activity—that high plane of spiritual achievement where a man, consciously pursuing the Moral Ideal, finding himself becoming more and more intimate with "the Good," and learning to love and reverence it, wakens to discover himself being drawn into a deepening unity and communion with the Divine Will, the self-bestowing Grace that lies at the heart of things? Or may we say that while the pilgrimage of the soul towards Good and God only emerges on the upper slopes of the hill of Aspiration into the sunshine of the Eternal, the lowlier and more shadowy valley-ways are nevertheless controlled and ultimately inspired by the same Goal? And that our insight into the meaning of life at its highest moments is the vision by which we may legitimately, and indeed most truthfully, interpret life as a whole?

I

We state the problem in its most pressing aspect when we say there are two main forms of religion, Love of God and Love of the World. At first sight they seem so utterly contradictory that the

Man's Search for Union with Reality

adoption of the one means the repudiation of the other. We have on the one hand the utterance of a great religious genius like John Henry Newman: "I rest on the thought of two and only two absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." And, apparently at the opposite extreme, the unconscious confession of the average man often is "Myself and the World are the only two luminously self-evident beings." We are not here thinking of that sinister meaning which the pietist usually gives "the world"; but simply of the world as that reality other than self by which self finds itself confronted in every moment of waking consciousness.

It is, indeed, just this contrast between the world and the individual which creates the problem and sets the task which life becomes. Life is the effort of the soul to find its reconciliation with Reality. This is the goal of every man's earthly pilgrimage. Confronting the actual world the inner life of the individual begins often in a sense of disquietude. For this external reality presents itself, now as a stern, uncompromising taskmaster, now as something transient and purposeless, now as something that stretches mysteriously out beyond any moment of waking consciousness. Confusion and bewilderment ensue, and the soul is spurred to surmount, if it may, this distracting phase of experience: to make its peace with the world, to find

Divine Vocation in Human Life

itself at home in its environment.¹ It seeks to identify itself with this reality beyond it in a way that will bring it rest and lasting satisfaction. And there would seem to be at least two outstanding conditions which must be fulfilled, if such a quest is to reach its goal, namely *immediacy* and *completeness*. It must be a warm, intimate, joyful heart-to-heart union with Reality: and it must be a union and reconciliation with the whole of Reality. It must be human yet all-comprehensive, universal yet personal. A third condition is sometimes added,²—that of coherence. For our present purpose it is sufficient to emphasize the two antithetic conditions of immediacy and completeness. For coherence is the condition on which the apparent opposition between the other two is finally overcome.

Perhaps the profoundest and most complete embodiment in literature of the struggling pilgrimage of finitude is to be found in Goethe's *Faust*. The drama takes the form of a series of crises in the development of a soul. The opening crisis represents the end of Faust's quest to win Reality by way of the *intellect*, and the end is suicidal despair. From this he is rescued by the bells of Easter morning. Then he is induced by Mephistopheles, the spirit

¹ cf. Prin. James Denney: "The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation," pp. 1-5.

² Prof. J. Royce: "Sources of Religious Insight."

Man's Search for Union with Reality

that denies, to try the way of *sense*, as the way of self-identification with Reality. This too ends in tragedy and remorse. In Part II of the drama Faust attempts to transcend the emphasized antagonism between Ego and the world by self-identification with the disembodied ideal of *Art*. But neither the Classical Ideal nor the modern Romantic Ideal, nor the union of the two brings peace of mind. And finally the search of the isolated Ego is abandoned, and Faust joins in *social effort* for the uplifting and perfecting of mankind. Here at last the search is crowned by attainment, and Faust enters the blessed Fellowship, the Kingdom of all souls in God. The perfect reconciliation between Self and World is thus achieved where morality becomes *religion*.

It is apparent that, in Goethe's view, these various spheres of human activity are stages on the way to the blessed life. And he suggests that the way of attainment is not the pursuing of each stage until it dissolves and proves illusion, but rather the transcending of each stage so as to include it in a wider comprehension. Goethe seems indeed to arrange the stages in Hegelian fashion. First there is the affirmative thesis of scientific research, the life of analytic thought. Then comes the negation or antithesis of this in the life of sense. There follows the first synthesis of these in the life of aesthetic activity. Starting from this somewhat passive

Divine Vocation in Human Life

synthesis as a new thesis, he passes to its antithesis in moral and social activity, until at length the supreme synthesis is reached, the eternalisation of the moment, in the blessed Fellowship, or the life of religion.

Without attempting any analysis of the drama, let us examine some of these stages, enquiring of each whether the union of individual with World, the identification of self with Reality, answers to the criteria of immediacy and completeness.

The quest of human finitude is a perplexing and fascinating search. We want to overtake the Infinite and make it ours, and ours not merely in the sense of having an abstract and distant acquaintance with it; we want a concrete and vital union with it. And it seems inevitable for finite consciousness that Infinity should present itself in a dual aspect, however strenuously we attempt to theorise ourselves above this dualism. The true infinite is the unity of the self-completed whole; the false infinite is the series whose infinity consists precisely in the fact that it never comes nearer completion. The one is an eternal Now, the other is an indeterminate projection in time. The one is qualitative, the other quantitative. The true infinite is the eternally present Reality, which contains time and expresses itself through time, but cannot itself be resolved into a time process.

Man's Search for Union with Reality

II

Consider first *the life of the intellect*. It is subject to the danger of being lost in the endless maze of abstraction. It seems a hard fate: you want to discover what it is that constitutes the being and individuality of the Universe; you wander on from abstraction to abstraction, from distinction to distinction and to new distinctions within these. But the estrangement from real life seems to deepen and grow, the longer and more vehemently you strive to surmount it. This is the strictly scientific or analytic point of view, subject to the tyranny of the false infinite.

The analytic mind does not always admit this immersion in the ocean of abstraction. The analyst often takes the particular aspect—the distinction *within* experience—through which he looks at the world, and he makes it do duty as an adequate explanation of all other aspects of Reality. The result is dogmatism and endless strife. G. K. Chesterton has reminded us of the old and pregnant fable of the five blind sages who went to visit an elephant. “One of them seized its trunk and asserted that an elephant was a kind of serpent; another embraced its leg and was ready to die for the belief that an elephant was a kind of tree. In the same way, to the man who leaned against its side it was a wall; to the man who laid hold of its

Divine Vocation in Human Life

tail, a rope ; and to the man who ran upon its tusk a particularly unpleasant kind of spear." But however much the blind men may have quarrelled about it,—even though they may ultimately have become agnostics, holding that, if there at all, it was quite unknowable,—the elephant was nevertheless within the range of a knowledge that has ceased from mere analysis and become synthetic or constructive. For the process of making distinctions is a process within experience. When that is recognised the endlessness of the analytic process is in effect transcended, the first and chief step is taken towards freedom from the tyranny of the false infinite in thinking.

Analytic knowledge can never lead to a complete philosophy of life. And the genuinely philosophic quest is worthy of a higher place on the pilgrim-way of finitude. For the enquiring mind starts from an immediate, though indeterminate, *totum* or *continuum* or stream of conscious awareness in which subject and object are held together in what constitutes the mind's first judgment on Reality. What seems at first immediate and self-explaining promptly resolves itself into endless contradictions. Philosophic curiosity or wonder arises : the mind loses itself, wanders through the maze of philosophic system and theory seeking rest, partially finding itself and losing itself again, till at length it transcends the mere series of theories, through the

Man's Search for Union with Reality

co-operation of its own activity with the effort expressed and embodied in these theories, and arrives once more at a kind of intuition of the complete Experience. Its vision pierces more or less dimly through the veil of discursive thought, and grasps, not perhaps with the clear, cold, organizing light of the understanding, but more or less in symbol, the Whole Reality. By sheer dint of the mind's effort from point of view to point of view towards complete knowledge, it is carried forward, as it were by its own momentum, beyond the limits of logical or discursive achievement, and finally *feels* its way to the heart of the Absolute.

It is probably some such experience that has led so many philosophers to affirm this to be the last stage of all in perfect knowledge. The last of Plato's four stages of knowledge is *ἐπιστήμη*, something beyond dialectic, to which Aristotle's *θεωρητικὸς βίος* is almost if not quite a kindred notion. Spinoza calls it *scientia intuitiva*, which transcends and obliterates all the illusions of finitude. And F. H. Bradley speaks of an immediate experience in which the mind makes a last leap out of the discursive processes of conceptual thinking into the bosom of the Absolute. You never get, he argues, from the processes of the understanding a solution of the old dilemma, the One and the Many. Knowledge passes from the immediacy of feeling, through the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

conceptual stage, back to an immediate intuition of the Absolute again.

But surely the last thing in mental effort is not a transcendence of all philosophy. "The pursuit of philosophy," says Hegel, "even in its highest flight, is utterly incapable of existing apart from scientific procedure." The antinomy of the understanding arises from the fact that its beginning has been lost sight of. Scientific knowledge does not begin in mere abstraction. If it did, then assuredly knowledge would be a perpetual process, the goal of which is a problematic conception, a limit that is forever receding; then assuredly you would have to wait till the time-process has wound itself out to an end—a self-contradictory notion. But knowledge does not begin in conception. You start from an immediate awareness, a living, striving, active self-consciousness, where practical and intellectual reason are forever inseparable. This awareness is of the nature of a judgment: it is the fundamental and indeed the only complete judgment on Reality, the whole process of judgment or inference being simply the process of systematic integration within this stream of awareness. It is the first judgment, and it is in essence the last, though in its ultimate stage it is no longer indeterminate and vague, but integrated, ordered, organic. In the last resort this Experience is Reality. Thus the mind does so far work out its own intellectual salvation, and is

Man's Search for Union with Reality

able to strain its vision forward, beyond the point to which it has come in making a logical road for itself, realizing that it is the Absolute that worketh in it both to will and to do of Its good pleasure.

Here the mind feels itself approximating at least to oneness with the Absolute Mind—entering the serene region of Theoria, becoming “a spectator of all time and of all existence,” thinking, in a measure, God’s thoughts after Him. It does indeed, in some sense grasp the whole of Reality. But ending as it often does in an idealistic Pantheism, it achieves this sense of completeness only at the expense of immediacy or intimacy of union with Reality. And even at its best it is robbed of that warmth and kindness which a full experience of life must possess. All the attention of the soul has been called off into the arid region of the discursive reason, where it watches in a kind of dream the mystic mazes of the “bloodless ballet of the categories.”

Even this however is not the last word to be said about philosophy. The vocation of philosophy need not be purely passive and contemplative. In its noblest manifestations it is always a moral, even a religious endeavour. It demands faith in the unity and coherence of Reality. And philosophy’s beatific vision cannot, as Aristotle says, be reached except by the pure-hearted. But so regarded

Divine Vocation in Human Life

philosophy is not merely a view of life, but a way of life, something that characterizes the entire pilgrimage, and every step of the pilgrimage may be bathed in the light of its high ideal.

III

Consider next, more briefly, *the life of sense*. It is really lower in the scale than the intellectual life. We place it here by way of contrast. Tired of merely catching momentary and distant glimpses of the Whole at the expense of all sense of immediacy, one may turn to plunge into the warm, kind life of the world. But when a man makes love of the sensuous world his religion, he places himself within the tyranny of the false infinite in another of its aspects. The attempt to comprehend the Whole at length by trying to overtake the endless maze of diversity is a process which carries its own defeat within it. The sense life does in a measure satisfy the condition of immediacy, but at the expense of the second condition of completeness, indeed to the entire destruction of this condition. Your contact with the real world is narrowed to a point, and past this point of awareness the material world seems to hurry restlessly. You have it and you have it not. It is momentary, transient, with the mere endlessness of a stream. You sow vanity and you reap again despair. It is the endeavour to appropriate and use the world in the way that will

Man's Search for Union with Reality

bring the maximum amount of immediate pleasure and absence of pain. It is the attempt to make yourself the intimate friend and comrade of the world by pursuit of the manifold variety of its sensuous charm and thrill and glow. But it is the way most subject to limitation, contradiction, unreality: the vain endeavour to grasp the false infinite of endless plurality without unity. In spite of the illusion of immediate oneness, Reality forever eludes your grasp. You gather it to your breast in shadowy fragments which keep slipping from you as you seek to appropriate more and more of this false infinite. The fate of Sisyphus is your heaven, your hell. The intoxicating joy of tempestuous passion turns in the end to an empty dream, the mad nightmare of Walpurgisnacht. Breaking in on the bewildering turmoil of the delirious dream are spasms of nausea and loathing, mutterings of conscience, and moments of stinging remorse. Here at last sense has run its course, and landed in utter negation, contradiction and revolt. Happy he to whom it brings a rush of repentant tears.

IV

Consider then further *the life of æsthetic culture*. This might be called the first upward stage towards immediacy and completeness of union with the Real World, the reconciliation of sense and reason in Art. In Art we do reach a union with the Absolute

Divine Vocation in Human Life

of a more immediate kind than in mere analytic thinking; and in contradistinction to the apparently immediate but fleeting and broken union with the Real in the sense life, it is in some sense a union with the Whole. "Art," says Schiller, "is a triumphant proof that limitation does not exclude infinity. And," he adds, "nothing else can prove it. For as in the enjoyment of Truth or logical consistency, feeling is not necessarily one with thought but follows accidentally upon it, such feeling can only prove that a sensuous nature may be subsequent on a rational one and conversely; not that both can exist together, not that they can act reciprocally upon each other, not that their union is absolute and necessary. Just the opposite inference would be more natural. The exclusion of feeling while we think, and of thought while we feel, would lead us to infer the incompatibility of these two natures; but as in the enjoyment of beauty or æsthetic unity there takes place an actual union and interpenetration of form and matter, of receptivity and activity, this very fact demonstrates the compatibility of the two natures, the realizableness of the infinite in the finite, and therefore the possibility of the most sublime humanity. We ought, therefore, no longer to be in perplexity to find a passage from sensuous dependence to moral freedom, seeing that in Beauty a case is given wherein the latter is able perfectly to co-exist with the former, and man is

Man's Search for Union with Reality

not obliged to escape from matter in order to assert himself as spirit."¹ The old Kantian antithesis between Desire and Reason, he in effect says, is here broken down. Man's sensuous nature is not outside the pale of reason. And just because of this, it may on the one hand make a man "more beastly than the beasts," or it may be ennobled into the sublimest moral action.

The aim of a work of Art, as Hegel says, is "to drag the heart through the whole significance of life." Nevertheless, in Art, the union of sense and reason is not yet at a perfect balance. Art is still haunted by subjectivity. It takes its stand at the sense point of view, but by an emotional rush of poetic fire it so transforms and elevates the particular that it points forward to the universal. Merely points forward, grasps symbolically, but does not actually seize and embody the universal. In Hegel's words, "The power that rescues us from the *here*, that consists in the finiteness and actuality of sense, is the freedom of thought in cognition. But the mind is able to heal this schism which its advance creates: it generates out of itself the works of fine art as the first middle term of reconciliation between pure thought and what is external, sensory, transitory, between Nature in its finite actuality and the infinite freedom of the Reason which comprehends." "Art," he says elsewhere, "is the thought or

¹ *Letters on Æsthetic Education.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

notion going out of itself and alienating itself in the sensuous. Yet the notion is the universal which preserves itself in its particularisation, dominates itself and its 'other,' and so becomes the power and activity that consists in undoing the alienation it has evolved. And thus the work of Art in which thought alienates itself belongs, like thought itself, to *the realm of comprehending thought*, and the mind in subjecting itself to scientific consideration is thereby but satisfying the want of its own inmost nature."

Æsthetic intuition thus has its affinity with philosophy. Wherein the poet or the artist differs from the metaphysician is that he does not need to make the painful journey of philosophy in order to attain his vision. He reaches it directly in the particulars of sense. In the rush of his abnormally quickened and vivid imaginative emotion he is able to expand the sense-image into a representation of the whole. Yet just because there is only one self-complete whole, the poet's vision and the philosopher's are in so far identical. The poet's enthusiasm is the more altruistic of the two, because he describes his vision in the language of sense-perception, which is the plain man's point of view. In the æsthetic vision the hard rind of Nature is broken through for the ordinary mind by the most direct and easy passage. The external and foreign is taken up into the poet's mind, "receives its spiritual baptism, is

Man's Search for Union with Reality

passed through it, and emerges cleansed of irrelevancies, breathing a human interest, feeling and insight; and divine ideals" which "steal access through our senses to our minds."

Indeed the highest regions of poetry and philosophy, the regions where they find their fruition, are practically identical. "In the wildest poetry there is logic, and in the most abstract philosophy there is metaphor." So close are the two regions that sometimes the poet crosses the borderland that lies between, and is common to, the two and talks philosophy. Two different sets of critics have called Browning a philosopher—those who say he was such and not a mere poet, and those who say he was no poet but a mere philosopher. On the other hand no philosopher, who has ever thought himself into concrete and living contact with Reality, but has burst through the strait bonds of categorical succession, at some moment in his reasoning, and has basked in the pure sunlight of Eternal Truth, has breathed the air of a Divine world, pierced with soaring vision into the heart of the Absolute, and voiced his ecstasy in words of rapt seraphic fire, moving along in a fine frenzy of prophecy, dropping golden words of profound yet simple sublimity, true poetry that will not die. Plato must have had such a vision of "the Good" in a moment of supreme spiritual elevation, but ever after he was doomed to search for the lost

Divine Vocation in Human Life

vision by the long and painful road of discursive logic. The pathetic yet beautiful irony is that he needs must search, for such a vision has forever laid its Divine compulsion on him ; yet he can never, in this finite, human region, achieve full vision again. But ever and anon, as he mounts the steep and toilsome path, glimpses of it break in on his soul and we are rewarded with a gush of immortal poetry.

The poet, on the other hand, has forever lost himself in the Divine vision. The irony of his lot is that for him it remains always a vision. Spell-bound, he can rarely, if ever, make a road for himself by means of scientific thinking towards the realization of his vision. Self-deceived, he may sometimes proclaim his vision the reality ; at best he is satisfied with this visionary approach to vital union. Plato was right. The philosopher is really the one who emerges into the waking world of truth : the life of sense-perception is the life of day-dreaming, of guess-work and shadows. Yet the poet does share the philosopher's joy. The plain man calls the poet "dreamer," and metaphysics "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." Yet if they are nearer the heart of the Eternal, it is the wisdom of the poet never to relinquish his dream, and of the philosopher never to yield to the temptation to return.

Man's Search for Union with Reality



But is there not some other sphere of life where a contact with ultimate Reality may be made, of such a kind that it fulfils the two conditions of immediacy and completeness? There remains still to be tried *the world of heroic moral activity*. The pursuit of Beauty for its own sake is not yet the highest form of participation in life's struggle. Here in the world of moral action we step back into the main stream of human life. We avoid the tyranny of the false infinite which presses on the life of sense, for example, in that by an act of will all desire is lifted up into the realm of moral purpose. One finds contact with Reality through a kingdom of purposes embodied in human society. Thus is the condition of completeness fulfilled. For as every stone laid true has in it, implicitly, the plan of the whole building, so the individual's discovery of a purpose in life links him with the whole system of purposes, of which human life consists. The individual begins also to make the world a congenial home for his soul by making society and nature the media through which he translates his own ideas into action. Presently the world discloses itself to the man of heroic moral action as hospitable to his aspirations and intentions. He begins more or less clearly to perceive an Infinite Purpose working itself out through history, a Purpose with

Divine Vocation in Human Life

which his own is in harmony. In the highest reaches of his activity he begins to recognize that his life of self-forgetting service is meeting with a response from the Spiritual world. And in the linking of his own will with the Infinite Divine Will, he wins that immediacy of contact with Reality for which his soul has longed.

At this point, however, morality passes over into *the sphere of religion*. If we may recall for a moment the illustration in Goethe's Faust, we may remind ourselves that at this point in the story the clock of destiny strikes, and Faust brings his compact with the spirit that denies, forever to an end :

“ Thus, thus I hail the moment flying :
‘ Ah, still delay, thou art so fair ’ ;
The traces cannot of my earthly being
In æons perish,—they are there !—
In proud forefeeling of such lofty bliss
I now enjoy the highest moment,—this ! ”

And Faust slips the leash of the spirit of disintegration and nothingness, enters the Fellowship of Blessedness, the Communion of saints and holy angels : for him the Kingdom of Heaven has come.

It may be due to the demands of the story, but it would seem as if, in Goethe's mind, when this hour is struck, the probation life of earth is ended for the soul. For him the earthly sphere would appear as entirely a preparation for a higher life of service hereafter. And the Divine summons

Man's Search for Union with Reality

to full and complete service is not heard as an authentic and undeniable voice in the soul until the close of the probation period. Death—the transition from finitude—is the final award of such a life, when the end and goal of all earthly striving, union with the ultimate Reality, at once intimate and complete, is achieved.

While this thought of a higher service hereafter—a religious belief to which Goethe clung—does save his view of the meaning of this present life from the suggestion of despair, there is surely a truer conception of the earthly sphere, in which the ideas of probation and vocation receive some kind of union and reconciliation. Religion may reach its consummation in a higher life of service beyond death. But religion, even when regarded as union with Reality, is in some sense achieved in this life. Life here is not merely a probation: it is a call to effect even now part of the plan of God. And the union of the two conceptions, probation and vocation, is found partly in the thought that man is called to co-operate with God in the achievement of his own perfect individuality; and partly in the complementary thought that this task is to be wrought out in the sphere of social service. The Blessed Fellowship or Kingdom of God is not merely an other-worldly reality. It is something that interpenetrates, and reacts on, the life of earth. Here in this life the moment may be reached, to

Divine Vocation in Human Life

which we can say, "Ah, still delay, thou art so fair!" Here and now we may participate in the Communion of saints and holy angels. And the hour when such a participation is reached is the hour when the Divine Voice is heard in the recognition of Vocation.

CHAPTER III

God's Search for Communion with Man

"HUNGER for Reality," it has been said, "is the most fundamental thing in human life. It was purposely created in us by Reality." Why? "Because Reality means to satisfy it."

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking."

It is with this suggestion that we must now for a little concern ourselves. Is God also a Pilgrim-God? Has He set out on a quest through, and by means of, Creation? And what is the nature of the Divine Quest? What response is God seeking to make to the outreachings of the human soul? In what sense, and to what end, is God active in His world? Where do we find that immanent energizing of God most perfectly? If the soul-hunger in man is itself a spiritual thing, is the hunger of God kin with it? May it be said that the spiritual hunger of man is in some sense a part of the Divine hunger? That the mystic is right when

Divine Vocation in Human Life

he says for God, "In that thou hast sought Me, thou hast already found Me"? Above all, if God is seeking to find Himself again in human personality, does our hope to know Reality depend on the self being real? Is God seeking to create and to perfect finite centres of personality for the supreme purpose of establishing communion with them in a fellowship and kingdom of souls, as the ultimate goal of His creative activity? Is there, as Apolinaris of Laodicea says, "an eternal determination of the Divine towards the human"? And does this process of incarnation, which, according to the Christian Faith, has perfected itself in One Life, seek now to extend itself over the human race through Him?

It is far easier to ask these questions than to give an answer which the reason can completely justify. The last word here must be left to intuition and imagination. Largely allowing the voices of speculative thought to speak for themselves, let us pass in review some of the hypotheses to which the results of scientific and philosophical investigation may be said to point.

I

In the ancient myth, Pygmalion, as he wrought earnestly at his statue, putting his whole soul into his work until it grew to life-likeness beneath his hands, fell in love with it at last; and the desire awoke in him that it might "come alive." Love

God's Search for Communion with Man

worked the miracle. The impossible came true. We may regard this tale as a creation-myth. God, the Creator-Artist, is the only craftsman who has breathed life into the work of His hands. And He has effected the miracle by the omnipotence of His love. He has imparted something of His own being to the crown of His creation.

Is it not along these lines we must think of the progressive immanence of God? If we may enter for a moment on a preliminary adumbration or sketch of the Divine working, under the aspect of immanence, we may find in the life of man an analogy which seems relevant here. We can discover differing degrees of human immanence. In the writing of a book or the painting of a picture, a man seeks to give body and form to his ideas. This is more than a mere externalization of them in space; because his will is exerted in the matter, something of his personality, his self, is imparted to these material embodiments of what previously only existed in his imagination. And inasmuch as these creations are given to the public, something of the writer's or the painter's self is made immanent in many other minds. These are, however, only stages of a contingent immanence which differs widely from one's essential immanence in one's own body.¹

In which of these senses should we conceive of

¹ See Illingworth: "Divine Immanence."

Divine Vocation in Human Life

God's immanence in His creation? May we not suggest that God manifests Himself in differing degrees of immanence in the various parts of His creation: that we may recognize one output of His will in the energy of the physical realm; something of the freedom of that will in the spontaneity of living things; and something of the inner core of His Personality in the conscious life of the world, especially when there is a complete manifestation of consciousness in man?

W. W. Peyton¹ has suggested that consciousness marks the main dividing point between the degrees of the Divine immanence. "Nature has thought, feeling, beauty, order inwoven into its fibres and forces. But it does not know them." Accordingly he suggests the naming of "this weft in the warp of Nature by the name of immanence, or indwelling, or interfusion." But because "we know that we think and feel and perceive the showing in Nature," he chooses to speak of "ourselves as the incarnation." "Immanence is the miracle of matter and life; incarnation the miracle of consciousness."

But God is not merely immanent in creation, a Spirit interfused through the material universe and determined by the laws of matter; as Perfect Personality He is also the transcendent God. He not only energizes in the longings, aspirations and desires of the uprising spirit of man, He approaches

¹ Peyton: "The Three Greatest Forces: Incarnation."

God's Search for Communion with Man

in gracious response, thus honouring human personality. "The secret of religion and civilization," says Peyton again, "is the resulting equilibrium of forces within and without—the human faculty coming to terms with a soliciting influx or pressure from the high heavens. . . . Life as it moves upwards meets with more and more of the opulence which besets it." "An unfolding of the religious faculty meets disclosures in the environment; rather the soliciting Divine Pressure, always present, draws out the progressing faculty to receive more of the Unseen." And in human self-consciousness, where man looks in on himself, we see the upward movement of God immanent in life meeting the downward movement of the transcendent God in Grace. God comes face to face with Himself in the human heart and conscience. As St. Chrysostom said, "The true Shekinah is man." And if anywhere these two movements of Godhead fuse into one, there incarnation is complete.

It is the doctrine of evolution which furnishes us with a key to such an interpretation of the relation of God to His world. This doctrine has wrought an enormous change in the thought of today. The scientific hypotheses of the eighteenth century had tended to empty the universe of God. The entire world of things and living creatures had become envisaged as the result of mechanical forces. God, if He existed at all, stood away off at the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

beginning and outside it all as the Primal Cause of creation. The theory of evolution, which seemed at first to complete the process of the evacuation of God from the Universe, is now widely recognized to be the very principle of the Creative Energy, still at work in the world. It is, says Sir Henry Jones, "in all the history of thought the first constructive hypothesis which is adequate to the uses of ethics and religion." Not only does it help us to realize the all-pervasive activity of God in creation, but it also gives us an interpretive principle whereby we can trace the method of the Divine working.

On the one hand, instead of God's creative energy being recognized as at work only at particular points in Nature and History, such as the coming of life, the dawning of consciousness, the achievement of self-consciousness, the arrival of great epochs and great personalities in human affairs; or instead of God being recognized as present and active only at the beginning of creation; or even as present nowhere, as the thorough-going sceptic says, this principle permits us to see the Divine activity everywhere. The Universe is a world still in the making, and God is, if not a "struggling God,"—for the word suggests that there are forces antagonistic to the Divine at work in the Universe,—certainly a constantly energizing God. It is within the all-embracing activity of God, which manifests itself in many forms, that the Universe has its being

God's Search for Communion with Man

Matter indeed, according to the new view of the atom as organized electricity, is just a manifold manifestation of energy passing from change to change. "God creates now," says F. W. Newman, "and always will create . . . His creative act is normal and incessant . . . And the great forces of the Universe are the means by which creation and other Divine actions are carried on." God, in this view, is the Creative Energy manifesting Himself in the myriadfold system of forces which we call the Universe. "My Father worketh hitherto," said Jesus.

On the other hand, this further gain has been got from a study of evolution in its cosmic aspects. Instead of the idea that the Universe can be explained by reducing all its complex structures to the simple primordial elements out of which they are composed, it is now widely recognized, not that we can explain the end by the beginning, but that we should explain the beginning by the end. We take the world's noblest systems and organisms and say, these are what the primordial elements really had it in them to be. So far from showing order developing out of chaos, scientific evolution is, we repeat, proving to-day that "there never was any chaos." As Prof. Sir Henry Jones puts it, "if out of crass matter is evolved all animal and spiritual life, does that prove life to be nothing but matter ; does it not rather show that what we in our ignorance

Divine Vocation in Human Life

took to be matter was really something much greater? If 'crass matter' contains all this promise and potency, by what right do we still call it 'crass'?"

Nor is the path of the evolutionary process merely fortuitous. Living things contain their own standard of development whereby we can judge of progress. Evolution is the unfolding of the organism's own inner principle. There is partial truth in Herbert Spencer's definition, that it is an advance from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity, to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, a process of individuation moving *pari passu* with organization. But it is more than that. It is really the integration of an organic system which was already present in embryo from the beginning. And this truth can be affirmed of the entire cosmic process. This inner principle, so manifest in living things at least, comes out of the heart of the cosmos. It is part of the vast design of God.

If that is so, then we can go on to say that the Divine Energy, the Unifying Principle behind the universe cannot be less noble than the noblest fact which has been brought to birth in the world. To quote Eucken, "If spiritual life with its inwardness and wholeness has a nature and origin of its own, then it belongs essentially to the Whole, and must from the very beginning have been operative in the movement of the Whole directing it towards

God's Search for Communion with Man

itself." And again, "How could an All bring forth an independent inner life, if it were soulless itself?"

We may put the point conversely with Sir Oliver Lodge: "It is not given to man to have thoughts higher and nobler than the real truth of things"; and we may argue that thoughts that in height and nobility reach up towards the truth of things can only be uttered by one who has in a measure experienced the truth of things. And the mind that has in measure experienced the truth of things must have some sort of kinship with the truth of things. In short the highest product of evolution must be creation's completest manifestation in time of God. To quote Sir Henry Jones again, "The fullest revelation of the nature of Deity is man at his best, the perfect man." In such a life God reveals Himself to be the perfection of all that is human. And we might say that the perfection of all that is human is the incarnation of God.

Browning has put this point succinctly as usual. "God," he says:

"dwells in all
From life's minute beginnings up at last
To man, the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of Life.
All tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far.
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God."²

² Browning: "Easter Day."

Divine Vocation in Human Life

II

Speaking, as we must, in the language of time, we can trace stages in the Creative Activity, and at each stage discover some part of the supreme purpose of God. It may be well, however, at the outset, to indicate what is generally taken to be the final end of God's creative activity. Without that it would be impossible to offer an explanation of the initial stages of the evolution of matter; for the theory of evolution cannot be applied in the same sense to the physical and mechanical realm as to the realm of living organisms. According to a widely accepted form of idealistic thought, the meaning and end of the entire evolutionary process is the individuation of the universe, the creation of free self-dependent personality in the Beloved Community or Kingdom of souls, the unifying bond of which is the mutual love of the individuals composing it, within the life and love of God. "God is Love"; and "love must needs express itself in action, and have that to which it can go out in mutual fellowship. . . . The age-long process—that Divine self-communication and impartation that constitute creation—began in order to produce a plurality of souls." "Love means the desire to share experience. And the movement is towards the development of personalities, because God Himself is Transcendent Personality."¹ "Love," says

¹ J. Y. Simpson : "Man and the Attainment of Immortality."

God's Search for Communion with Man

Richard Rolle, "truly suffers not a loving soul to bide in itself, but ravishes it out to the lover, that the soul is more there where it loves than where the body is that lives and feels it." This is in essence as true of God's love to man, as of man's love to God.

"Freundlos war der grosse Weltenmeister ;
Fühlte Mangel ; darum schuf er Geister
Selige Spiegel seiner Seligkeit."

Turning now to glance at the main stages of the creative process, the facts seem to justify the assertion that the first effort of creative activity is *the Divine search for a field fit to be the residence of life*. And it would seem as if, in order to do this, God must needs place between Him and the emergence of beings fit to be the objects of His love, the long story of His patience in Nature. Whether we are to regard matter as "the result of the elimination of freedom from a certain portion of the experience of God," or as the residua of dead acts of willing, or however we are to regard it, we may venture on this statement, that the first output of God's creative energy in time was into forms furthest removed from the centre of His essential Godhead. God withdrew, as it were, behind a veil, separating Himself off by a far remove from the birth of the highest forms of life, in order that these might be endowed with the freedom necessary for perfect

Divine Vocation in Human Life

communion, a freedom which involves the risk that such beings might deny and forget God for a time.

In what sense, if any, can we apply the conception of evolution to this wider realm of Nature beyond the sphere of living things which it holds within its embrace? It has recently been shown,¹ that "Darwinian fitness is compounded of a mutual relationship between the organism and the environment. Of this, fitness of environment is quite as essential a component as the fitness which arises in the process of organic evolution; and in fundamental characteristics the actual environment is the fittest possible abode of life." In the cooling process which goes on in the making of worlds, from the nebulæ or fire-mists, through white, yellow and red stars, the elements—which spectrum analysis reveals to be practically the same throughout stellar space—gradually sort themselves out, those with the lightest atomic weight taking up a position on the outer circumference of the different worlds. Of these, hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon are the chief; and these, with their compounds, can be demonstrated to be the fittest of all the known substances for the appearance of life. Water, to take one example, with its nearly maximal specific heat, its constancy of temperature, its mobility, its power as a solvent, and the numerous ways in which it enters

¹ Henderson: "The Fitness of Environment."

God's Search for Communion with Man

into composition with carbon, helps to create in environment an *ensemble* of fitness for life.

This "fitness of environment" is, says the writer just quoted,¹ "both real and unique." It is "one part of a reciprocal relationship of which the fitness of the organism is the other. This relationship is completely and perfectly reciprocal." Further, this "fitness of environment results from characteristics which constitute a series of maxima, —together forming the greatest possible fitness." And the conclusion which this investigator is led to is that "coincidences so numerous and so remarkable as those which we have met with in examining the properties of matter as they are related to life must be the orderly result of law, or else we shall have to turn them over to final causes and the philosopher. . . . In some obscure manner, cosmic and biological evolution are one. In short, we appear to be led to the assumption that the genetic and evolutionary processes, both cosmic and biological, when considered in certain aspects, constitute a single orderly development that yields results not merely contingent, but resembling those which in human action we recognize as purposeful. For undeniably two things which are related together in a complex manner by reciprocal fitness, make up in a very real sense a unit, something quite different from the two alone,

¹ Henderson : *ibid.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

or the sum of the two, or the relationship between the two. In human affairs such a unit arises only from the effective operation of purpose."

This writer is reluctant, however, to hand the point over to the philosopher or the theologian. But he is compelled in candour to admit that, even though mechanistic causes can be traced at work throughout the entire realm of Nature, organic and inorganic alike, though the theory of vitalism keeps receding before scientific research, yet in the long run "matter and energy have an original property, assuredly not by chance, which organizes the universe in space and time." And in a subsequent volume,¹ he makes the statement, to which his own investigations seem to point, that "no idea is older or more common than a suspicion that somehow Nature itself is a great, imperfect organism." In some sense the whole is prior to the parts and determines their function. We scarcely expect a writer who is dealing mainly with inorganic nature to go further than that. For it is in the later—the biological—stages of the evolutionary process that the real evidence of teleology in the cosmos comes out clearly. "If life realizes a plan," says Bergson, and we may apply his remark to creation in general, "it ought to manifest a greater harmony the further it advances, just as the house shows better and better the idea of the architect as stone is laid

¹ Henderson : "The Order of Nature."

God's Search for Communion with Man

upon stone."¹ But it is surely remarkable that a strictly scientific investigation should have led to this result: that one of the earliest efforts of the Creative energy is the search for a field fit to be the residence of life; that the universe is in its very essence biocentric.

III

A second stage of the creative process is *the search for life to occupy this field*. The origin of life is still as great a mystery as ever to the scientist. It is unnecessary to suppose, however, that there was a special intervention of the Divine Intelligence and Will in the creation of life in the world. Few things are more certain than that every life-process is conducted according to physico-chemical laws. But even though the emergence of life itself on the terrestrial globe may be due to physical and chemical activities, it would still be "the crowning and most wonderful instance of teleology in the whole universe."² This "emergent evolution" of organic life really sheds a light on the fundamental nature of these physico-chemical processes. This was what they had it in them to become. This wonder, which has appeared in the time-process, belonged from the beginning to the essential nature of the Universe, and was waiting

¹ Bergson: "Creative Evolution."

² Henderson: "The Fitness of Environment."

Divine Vocation in Human Life

only for the coincidence of all the conditions in order that they might coalesce to produce the organism. Thus the arrival of the organism and the progressive unfolding of organic life are the revelation of a deeper significance in the world of things. The Universe is alive. It is only we, ourselves subject to the limitations of finitude, who cannot see its livingness except in the microcosm. The process of individuation has to advance to the stage of producing living things, before life, which belongs also to the macrocosm, can be apprehended as such by the finite mind.

This search for the life-principle on the part of the universal Creative Energy is really continuous with the prior search for an environment fit for life. They are each stages on the way to perfect individuation. And the higher stage is simply a new insight into the true meaning of the earlier. It is the Divine vocation of the physical realm to prepare the scene for the organic. Speaking of Nature, the Psalmist says: "Things continue this day according to Thine ordinances for all are Thy servants"; they are called to the service of life. They are "ministers of God that do His pleasure."

In a third stage the Divine Creative Energy continues its *search within the life-processes for true individuals*; the Divine effort is next directed to *evoke consciousness* among sentient beings. We who are conscious beings, and ourselves a branch on the

God's Search for Communion with Man

tree of life, can look back and proclaim this to be in part the meaning of the life-process. For it is in the organic sphere that we can most directly apply the evolutionary principle, and explain the beginning by the end. A continuous life-story is traced from the primordial life-cell up to the highest organism, man. It links itself also with the still earlier story of the making of the world.

“ A fire-mist and a planet, a crystal and a cell,
A jelly fish and a Saurian, and caves where the cave-men dwell,
Then a sense of law and beauty, and a face turned from the
clod,
Some call it Evolution, and others call it God.”

In the story of “ the origin of species ” it is not suggested that one species has been evolved out of another, but that each represents a branch off from the main stem of the tree of life at different periods of its development. These branchings off serve to purge the main stem of characteristics not essential to its highest development, and so prepare the way for the next higher species. Man is not descended from the ape ; but both are descendants of some original primate—with this difference: most of the higher species have branched off along *cul-de-sacs*. There is little further development possible along that way. Man alone, on the crown of the stem of the tree of life, still shows unexhausted possibilities of further advance.

It is along an inward and mental direction man's

Divine Vocation in Human Life

development is now taking place. "There originate in nature in its winding towards the animal level numerous and clear evidences of psychic life."¹ Glimmerings of conscious life may be traced in some of the higher animals, particularly those associated with man. But in man alone has consciousness come to maturity. Probably the first reflections of man on his outer world were not so advanced as a "sense of law and beauty" suggests. But in man alone, through the development of memory, came the power to "look before and after and pine for what is not"; the power to long and wonder; the first beginnings of thought. When mental powers came to a focus in the consciousness of man, a great step was taken towards the integration of life in centres of personality.

We come to a fourth stage. An approximation to the cosmic end of the whole process of development through living organisms is attained in *personality*. The dawn of *self-consciousness* on earth is as mysterious as the emergence of life or of consciousness. But once again it may be suggested that it is as the result of the coincidence of all the conditions within the web of life that this feature of the cosmic Principle was able to manifest itself within finitude. It is the Divine Life in its imperative longing after meanings and ends in creation, straining and struggling through the ages to reveal

¹ Eucken : " Die Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion."

God's Search for Communion with Man

itself. So striking is this new emergence, self-consciousness, that we might almost say with Meister Eckhardt: "It appears as if God had forgotten all His creatures save us alone." But our emphasis here must be on the word "appears." It is not really so, in a cosmic view. Yet it would certainly seem that there has emerged at this stage something of peculiar value to the Divine Life. It is, according to one idealistic view, the Absolute "coming alive," or awake, in finite centres. As Goethe puts it: "God meets always Himself; God in man meets again Himself in man. Hence there is no cause to esteem ourselves lightly in comparison with the greatest."

We have alighted here on the borderland of Pantheism. This view, of a vast ocean of cosmic life throwing up innumerable waves whose white crests of whispering foam are the ocean awakening to its own self-consciousness, is apt to run to either of two extremes. It either asserts that "All is God" and tends to make the manifold of creation, including human personality, mere appearance which is ultimately merged or absorbed into the life of the Absolute. Or it asserts that "God is All," and tends to make God disappear in His material creation. It is an ethically repellent view, for it not only imperils the personality of God and the individuality of man, but it tends to minimize the reality of moral evil. In either view the whole

Divine Vocation in Human Life

purpose and meaning of the long story of becoming is disannulled; whereas in a true religious view the end of the story of becoming is "the conservation of values." And value presupposes personality: it can exist only for personality.

"Religious feeling," says Höffding,¹ "is evoked by the experience of the relation between value and reality, and hence presupposes a known reality." "The ultimate standard of value," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is the life of God. The degree of the reality of anything is the degree of its value to God." What then of self-conscious personality as it is manifested in man? For while the race enjoys a comparative immortality, the individual, on his physical side at least, belongs to the realm of transient things. "Atoms," Sir Oliver Lodge suggests, "have a long (not necessarily unending) life because their comparative permanence is necessary to God for the construction of higher systems and organisms." On the other hand, systems of mere physical life are much shorter-lived than atoms. The body, for example, fulfils the purpose God has in view for it—then dissipates. "What is that purpose?" he asks. "It is to form a basis on which emerges a system of much higher value to God, human personality. . . . Personality is an existence strengthened and compacted by experience, suffering and joy, till it is no longer a

¹ *Philosophy of Religion.*

God's Search for Communion with Man

function of the material aggregate in which for a time it is embodied, but belongs to a universe of Spirit closely related to immanent and transcendent Deity. It is a microcosmic reproduction of the essential nature of Deity."¹

When we pass to a fifth stage now in progress in human history, we begin to see what is the nature of the value of human personality to God. God's search is not yet ended with the emergence of self-consciousness. He goes on seeking for *the perfection of individuality with a view to communion with Himself*. For individuality is not yet perfected in man. But man is endowed with the promise and potency of individuality in the gift of self-determination. And it is by patient endurance that we can win possession of our souls.

“And he who flagged not in the earthly strife
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to Eternal Life.”

It is part of the meaning of our life here that we are called on to co-operate with God in the perfecting of our individuality. With the gift of freedom God has given us a share in the fashioning of ourselves. Nor is it merely a case of the Divine *nisus* manifesting itself in human self-determination to this end. God struggles in all man's environing life to bring about this consummation.

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge : “Man and the Universe.”

Divine Vocation in Human Life

From this vantage point we can look back over the entire process of creative activity, and re-interpret it as an outflow of Divine Grace. Grace explains nature. As the parent-love that feathers the nest for its fledglings, so is the Divine Grace, conveniently arranging the material system of things to be the home of life. Further, when life arrives on the earth, this environment manifests itself under new aspects, which were really latent in its constitution from the outset. It reveals itself as permeated with a Divine Energy making for health and wholesomeness. There runs through nature a *vis mediatrix naturae*, "calm oblivious tendencies," "silent overgrowings,"—not only processes making for the propagation of life, but also anabolic processes making for the renewal of life. Death, looked at in this light, is no evil but as natural as the falling of leaves in Autumn, a thing lit with its own beauty, significance and purposiveness. Without death all progress among living things would come to an end. Nor has this force, transfusing environment, which we dare to call an aspect of Grace, revealed, on the plane of living things, all that it has in it to be. It still awaits the arrival of further conditions before it can reveal its higher characteristics. And when mind emerges among living things, there begins to manifest itself a sensitive presence of purity enshrined in nature, an environmental force making for righteousness.

God's Search for Communion with Man

"Purity," says Ruskin, "is the type of the Divine Energy."¹

And this tendency in environment is fundamentally one with the urgent impulse which strives upward within man. They are branches of that stream of spirit which surges through Nature and Life, making for wholeness, holiness. It is a stream which renews life's brokenness, attunes again life's harsh discords, undoes sin's consequences, heals its wounds. Nature on this view appears to be infinitely patient, enduring, forgiving. But we have not yet seen this power which pervades nature and life, in its highest manifestation. Glimmerings of a still higher aspect begin to appear in some of the higher animals; and finally it emerges, baptized and transfigured in man's moral and social environment, as a stream of pity and self-sacrifice. We live by the sacrifice and suffering of others. And all the pain in which the gift of life was bequeathed to us, all the nurture on which we were dependent, all the expenditure of thought in our education, all the trust and helpfulness and sympathy that is ours through the social fabric, every sacrificial life that has lifted men to higher and holier things, and supremely the Cross of Jesus—these also are aspects of the Grace of God emerging at ever new levels of action, the higher comprehending the lower: God lifting us towards Himself.

¹ Ruskin: "Modern Painters."

Divine Vocation in Human Life

“The Grace of God,” says Clutton Brock,¹ “is a free gift offered to all men, as the sun offers its light and heat. He pours out His grace in all that happens to us; in beauty that we may see or not see; in truth that we may discover or not discover; in the sacred goodness of other human lives that we may feel or not feel. And this sense of beauty or truth or goodness does not depend on mere ability of any kind. . . . There is a sense of direction in all the higher human activities which seems to be independent of all other powers, and which must be a sense of direction towards something. According to the doctrine of the Grace of God, it is a sense of direction towards God Himself. God is a fact like the sun. He exercises an attraction upon us all. But because He is a person and it is the attraction of His desire, and because we are persons with a freedom to desire or not desire, we are not utterly subject to His attraction, as other bodies are to the attraction of the sun. We can refuse it or yield to it. We can forget God in ourselves, or we can forget ourselves in God.”

These, then, are the two forces making towards the end of perfected individuality, the freewill with which man is endowed, and the Divine Grace—the world of gracious invitation and reinforcement with which God has beset us behind and before in life. It is as if God, having given us the awful

¹ “Studies in Christianity.”

God's Search for Communion with Man

power to choose or refuse, could not leave us wholly to our own devices, but has surrounded us with powers and agencies, to which it is our highest act of freedom to submit ourselves, setting our own desires in harmony with the Divine desire, in order that we might achieve fitness for fellowship with Him.

IV

We are not yet at the end of the Divine Search as we see it at work in the world. We may single out a sixth movement of the Divine Search, which goes on side by side with the last, *God's efforts to reveal Himself to finite personality*. This is the supreme aspect of the Grace of a Transcendent God, condescending towards our imperfection, stooping to bequeath Himself to our brokenness. Here at last begins to come in sight the ultimate goal of the entire process. For the essence of personal activity, whether in God or in man, is not merely the finding of oneself in other lives, but the making of oneself actual to other lives. God would have devised a barren form of existence for Himself if the Universe were simply His mirror. God's supreme desire is to disclose His inmost nature to the many centres of personal life in which the universe has resulted. God in His essential being is Love. And Love cannot live in self-contemplation. It must create for itself a fellowship of souls in which

Divine Vocation in Human Life

it may live and move and have its being. These centres of personality are springs of love, drawing their resources ultimately from the Eternal Love. It is Love that creates and perfects personality. "Love is," says Henry Scougal,¹ "the only thing we call our own: other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can ravish love. By giving our love we give all: we give our hearts and wills, by which we possess all other enjoyments. Nay, since it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver . . . he who loveth may in some sense be said not only to bestow all that he has, but all things else which may make the beloved person happy; since he heartily wishes them and would readily give them if they were in his power; which sense it is that makes one bold to say, that divine love doth in a manner give God unto Himself; by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of His nature."

Such then is the end of God's creative activity—to create a fellowship of mutually loving souls within the life and the love of God. And to do this God must not only fashion centres of personal life, but also seek to reveal Himself to them in love. Nature, History, and inspired Personality are the avenues of the Divine self-revelation. God shows us something of the emotions of His heart in the beauty and sublimity of the natural world: He

¹ "The Life of God in the Soul of Man."

God's Search for Communion with Man

shows us something of His purpose and intention in the processes of evolution and the movements of History. And He reveals still more of His mind and enables us to come into contact with, and to gain knowledge of, Himself, through inspired personalities, the torch-bearers of Humanity.

God's revelation is a progressive revelation. He makes His disclosures gradually, as man wins power to receive them. In Nature we get but glimpses of the trailing robe of His glory. Nature is not so much a revelation as an expectation of disclosures yet to be. It "groaneth and travaileth waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." In History we begin to feel the gathering volume of the central current of the process of Divine Self-disclosure. The training and disciplining of Nature becomes in History the choosing and predestining of man. We witness nations summoned to service, and one to the supreme service of unfolding the inmost character of the Divine. And again in prophecy, it is the "I AM" that speaks by inspiration which is the basal revelation of all God's expressions of Himself; it is the "I LOVE"—"I am the Father"—which is its consummation.

According to Christianity, the summit of all God's revelations of Himself through inspired personality is Jesus of Nazareth. In Him the progressive incarnation of God has found the Word, "the Eternal Speech of Whom all creation

Divine Vocation in Human Life

is speaking in dim detail." "The desire of all the nations has come to its own in Christ." "The sinless man . . . is discerned as the incarnation of the abysmal Personality whom we feel in the heart of the Universe." He is "the radical idea of creation come to its coronation." "The relation of the Divine incarnate in Nature to the Incarnation in Christ is the relation of an ascending series." In Him "the parts have found their Whole."¹

And still the process goes on beyond the earthly life of Jesus. God's seeking to create a Fellowship of souls within His own life is really His seeking to extend the Incarnation, through the ever-living Christ, to Humanity, to build a Mystical Body for Himself that shall link time with eternity. And the members of this Mystical Body, the Holy Assembly, are all destined and called to service on behalf of the Whole. It is through the prophetic voices finding an answering echo in the individual conscience that we hear and answer this call. It is through sharing the secrets of God's Purpose that we learn the highest ways of co-operation with God in the accomplishing of His supreme Plan. Some are no doubt called to higher stations than others in the Beloved Community of Service, the Kingdom of God. But all are called.

Here then the goal of man's pilgrimage and the

¹ Peyton : "The Three Greatest Forces : Incarnation."

God's Search for Communion with Man

goal of God's search meet in the conception of vocation. God's choosing of us for His service is in a sense a manifestation of His nature. It is eternal as Himself. God is the great Co-operator. It is towards this end He has been working since the commencement of the creation-process. "God chose you from the beginning," says St. Paul.

SECTION II
VOCATION IN LIFE

- I THE CONCEPTION OF VOCATION**
- II CRITICISM OF THE CONCEPTION**
- III THE PYRAMID OF VOCATION**

CHAPTER I

The Conception of Vocation

THERE is often a divine quality about the first bloom of a word's significance. But this fades in time as daylight fades off the hills at evening. The word "vocation" seems to have shared this common fate. Literally, vocation should mean an act of calling, a summons of some sort. We find it used in this sense in the New Testament. Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseeches the readers of the Epistle to the Ephesians to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. When, however, we study the New Testament usage of the English equivalent of the word, we find that it invariably refers to God's "calling" of men into *σωτηρία*, salvation. That is the meaning of the "holy calling" whereby God has called us, the "heavenly calling" whereof we are made partakers. Though it is a calling without repentance on God's part, there is a danger that we on our part may not abide in this calling, and there is need to pray that God may count us worthy of our calling, to work to make our calling and election sure, and

Divine Vocation in Human Life

to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.¹ Man's will as well as God's is involved in this vocation. It is close to the meaning with which we would fain re-invest the word, though here the fact of Divine Grace is more prominent than that of human achievement.

But in the ordinary secular usage of the word "vocation," we do not as a rule think of it as something in which the will of God is concerned. At the best we think of it as a dignified name for moral duty, but for the most part it is used as a designation merely for the business, trade, or profession we pursue. In this meaning of secular calling or avocation, we usually describe it by reference to the material contents, the actual details of our business in life. When we do at rare moments lift the word to the loftier plane of moral duty, we interpret it as the conscientious exercise of the gifts, capacities and opportunities which life has laid to our hands. What we desire to claim for it in these pages is an elevation to the loftiest plane on which it is possible to place it, that in which it is apprehended as a Divine summons to service, to the fulfilling of a definite part in the Purpose or Plan of God for men, a summons in which the called may possess in less or greater

¹ Eph. 4¹, 2 Tim. 1⁹. Heb. 3¹, Rom. 11²⁹, 1 Cor. 7²⁰, 2 Thess. 1¹¹, 2 Pet. 1¹⁰, Phil. 3⁴.

The Conception of Vocation

clearness the consciousness of having heard the Divine voice calling him to the task.

If this is not exactly the sense in which the New Testament mainly understands the word "vocation" or "calling," it is closely bound up with it. For on the sacred page men are "called to be saints."² And a call to sainthood is, in its full significance, a call to the investment of every activity of life, secular as well as sacred, with the suggestion that it is something wrought for God. We wish thus to view vocation as a term of the highest religious import. It is a call to all men to sanctify themselves for service, and to sanctify all service as for God. And in supreme cases the subject of the summons actually *bears* the uttered Will of God for him.

I

It is sometimes through keeping bad company that words, like human beings, lose caste. But more often it is the mental and moral atmosphere of the work-a-day world that is responsible for their deterioration, until a poet redeems them. The atmosphere of our day is infected for evil as well as for good with the scientific habit of seeking for origins rather than for ends or purposes. As far as the scientist can, he has banished from his vocabulary the conception of teleology. And

² Rom. 17.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

when one turns to question the average man about the significance which he attaches to his calling, it soon becomes apparent that this habit, which has spread downwards from the cloisters of science, accounts, in part at least, for the shabby and down-at-heel condition of vocation in its ordinary usage.

One man may answer, "My occupation was determined for me purely by accident or outward circumstance. I entered it because it happened to be the line of least resistance. A stone tumbles into a crevice on a rocky hillside. Neither the stone nor the niche willed the connection. Nor is there the slightest appearance of design about the movement—anything that looks like an act of will on the part of any larger Something of which the stone and the niche were fragments. I am the stone in the crevice. From the original cause which led to my occupation in life all purposiveness and choice were absent." In many an instance this explanation seems a plausible and apt enough description of what really happened. Yet the comparison of the actions of conscious life with the mechanical movements of nature can never be completely justified. Granted that the choosing of an occupation may be a mere short-cut for mental inertia, yet that very sluggishness of purpose is in some sense an act of will, even if it be only the will not to will. And on the other hand the opening of an opportunity to labour is more than a mere chance

The Conception of Vocation

coincidence. It is at least a by-product of the intricate web of human purposing.

The philosophy of coincidence—if we can call it such—is still an unexplored and uncharted region. The dictionary definition of a coincidence, as “the occurrence of an event at the same time as another event without any apparent connection,” while it is no doubt etymologically correct, leaves out the main significance which the word had come to hold for human thought. That A blew his nose at the same moment as B, his neighbour, shut and bolted his front door might be only a coincidence in the sense that everything that happens in the same moment of time is coincidental. But a concurrence is only a coincidence in the parlance of to-day when the concurrent events are linked up somehow with the network of human desires, wishes, longings, purposes. When the compartments of two trains travelling in opposite directions on parallel lines, each containing a person who is a friend of the other, stop exactly opposite each other at a wayside station, enabling the two friends to exchange a wished for word, we have a coincidence in the modern usage of the word. It is usually the apt fitting of some mechanical incident into the moment of some human purpose or desire. So it may in a sense be called a teleological happening, even though there is no warrant for premising design on the part of some over-arching Will, any more than, in the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

occurrence of the crevice across the pathway of the rolling stone, there is design either on the part of the hill, or Nature, or, let us say, Mr. Herbert Spencer's Unknowable. Presumably they are all equally indifferent to the concurrence.¹

If, therefore, coincidence implies purpose somewhere, the concurrence of two factors, each separately linked with the web of human purposing, such as the desire and the opportunity for work in the case cited, cannot be described as mere blind fortuity. And if God is working out His own designs through the intricate maze of human endeavour, it is open to the religious mind to see "leading" even in the simple finding of an occupation; to recognize that the marriage of circumstance and conduct reflects the footprints of the Divine Purpose within the soul of a man.

A second man may answer, "My trade was determined for me by birth or heredity. Born into a family whose head followed a particular calling, I began by and by to take an active share in the business. This is my vocation—that which I was born to be. And my birth into this family was strictly determined also by a chain of preceding events." Here again the having regard merely to origins has blinded the eyes to other factors in the

¹ It is, however, doubtful if coincidence, in this sense, must be ruled wholly out of the happenings of nature. The concurrence of an environment fitted for life, and of the living organism fitted for environment, does open up the ultimate question whether there is overarching Purpose. (See previous chapter.)

The Conception of Vocation

case. The parents' choice of each other was an act of will, prepared for by some mutual affinity, which they themselves, in the moment of falling in love with each other, may have been inclined to consider part of some Divine Intention. But however that may be, the character produced in part by the blending of the temperaments of the parents may involve the possession of aptitudes and capacities which clearly mark the child out for a particular occupation. And although there is undoubtedly a sense in which determination enters largely into life, restricting both by heredity and circumstance the avenues of pilgrimage, yet, however closely the net may be drawn, it is always open to every man to magnify his calling, to cultivate the flowers of hope and praise within the walls of servitude.

If God does not grant to men unlimited freedom in the choice of a calling, there always remain the right and the duty to moralize the determining limitations of life, to glorify the dusty roadway, to give the pilgrimage a goal. In the matter of vocation, freedom is not so much a birthright as a privilege to be won. It is faithfulness that overcomes the world, enabling a man to enter into the joy of his Lord, to become ruler over many things. God leads every true steward of life into a large room.

A third man may answer, "My profession was chosen for me by a friend, or friends whose authority

Divine Vocation in Human Life

I recognize, and whose advice I value. I have been *called* to my occupation by my father, guardian or adviser. Here at last there is beginning to be recognized purposive choice or will as a directly determining factor—the will of those who have exercised their judgment in the matter, as well as the subject's own will in acquiescing in that judgment. But here also it is a mistake to think that the Divine voice has been entirely ruled out in the determination of one's calling. It is along the natural channels of life that the Divine summons usually reaches a man. It is to be sought for not alone in the limitations which birth and upbringing impose on one, but in the judgments of those who have achieved the wisdom of experience, and in the inclinations and aptitudes which govern one's own response to such wisdom. It is through failure to attend to these voices, through the obstinate craving to follow the promptings of prejudice, of lazy convention, or of untutored ambition that there are so many square pegs in round holes to-day. The faults of an educational system which attempts to force every child through the same mould are also frequently to blame. At present there are men in every vocation far above and far below the standard of intelligence demanded by that occupation. The reform of wrong methods of education, and a more extensive application of psychological

The Conception of Vocation

tests of fitness would probably go far to eliminate the possibility of vocational misfits. For it has been urged that there is one vocation for which each member of the community is best fitted. "There appears to be," says Dr. Maurice Nicoll,¹ "a particular line along which fullest expression is most easily experienced in every individual. Along this line the point of excess is not soon reached; on the contrary it would appear that there is a backing from the Unconscious."

We question yet another, and he answers, "Following my own bent and inclination, I myself deliberately chose my occupation. My vocation is that to which *I* have called myself." And when all is said, this is the commonest answer, to which most of the others hitherto considered could be pressed back in the end of the day—the finding of the origin of one's vocation in one's own will. Even the men who say "it was all due to chance or fate," admit that there was present in them at least a vague will to work; and had the opportunity that came by chance, or that which presented itself in the family connections, been something from which the man's soul revolted, his own will might have had the last word in the matter. Again, what the experts of life offer a man is not so much extraneous advice as something which elicits one's own reasoned judgment. Man on the whole prefers to think that he

¹ *Dream-Psychology.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

is master of his own fate, and captain of his soul in the voyage of life.

Criticism of this fourth view of vocation leads directly and easily to a consideration of vocation from the point of view of ends or purposes. For when a man says, "My vocation is that to which I have called myself," very little further question is required before he is ready to characterize vocation as "that to which my ideal of what I would be has called me. I, as yet a vague and indeterminate entity (*kleine Ich*), set before myself the vision of myself as a perfect ploughman, a successful grocer, an 'approved banker.' I accepted the call of that larger and fuller Ego, and so entered my vocation."

II

But how much is involved in the thought of an ideal self, a larger and fuller Ego? It is, we believe, in following out this enquiry that we shall at length draw close to the ultimate meaning and *rationale* of entering a vocation. Why does a man desire to be a perfect ploughman, successful grocer, or approved banker? Even if we begin our enquiry near the lowest rung of the ladder of life-motives, we shall find ourselves being pushed by the logic of life upwards towards the summit wheré we may hope to find the goal we seek.

The Conception of Vocation

Thus the man of imperfect motive may answer us, "My vocation or calling is my way of tackling the struggle for existence. I work because one must live. It is my response to the instinct to keep soul and body together." It is as if he should say, "We work—to get some food—to eat—to make us strong enough—to work—to get more food—to eat"—a grimly ironical picture of an almost meaningless circular process, in which men are like squirrels in a revolving cage. But keeping soul and body together is a holier task than it often gets credit for being. Why should a man be eager to keep soul and body together if life is an empty song? Yet the instinct to do so is more than a mere clinging on to physical life. The revulsion of mankind from the thought of suicide springs surely from the conscience. There is the ineradicable feeling that it would be arrogating to oneself a function that belongs to the Giver and Disposer of Life. To this feeling, Plato in the *Phædo* has given noble expression. "We mortals are here on duty and we must not withdraw till we have our orders."¹

The only circumstance that can justify the taking or the giving up of life is the perilous position of a cause whose worth is greater than a man's mere physical existence. The welfare of most causes is advanced by the preservation rather than the loss

¹ Man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door of his prison and run away. . . . The gods are our guardians, and we are a possession of theirs."
ibid.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

of life. Herein lies the clue to the problem immediately before us. It is because of the sacred issues that hang on the maintaining of physical existence that we persist in keeping soul and body together. This is true whether the individual consciously recognizes it to be so or not. The man who makes his vocation merely his way of facing the problem of the struggle for existence usually has some further unacknowledged motive in the background. His love has perhaps given hostages to life : he has to make good the trust which other lives repose on him. Thus is he forced up to a higher rung of the ladder of human purpose.

He adds a new dimension to the conception when he explains his vocation as the means whereby he endeavours to secure the well-being of his family. The call of the physical self deepens as it merges into the call that comes from those lives with which he finds himself in relations of interdependence—to which his life is knit in bonds of love. Thus his little self broadens out into this larger conception of selfhood involving the weal of others. It is an ideal beyond himself, not merely in thought but in fact, which summons him to his life-task.

Even so however, his conception of vocation may not be completely moralized. Material considerations must, of course, always enter into the business of living : men are not discarnate spirits. Money is matter lifted symbolically into the borderland

The Conception of Vocation

of the spiritual; and while, on the one hand, it may be used as the means to noble ends, on the other, it may be degraded to unworthy purposes, or even made an end in itself. A man may regard his work not as a vocation but as a mere policy to be pursued, a matter of utility and expediency, not of morality. However sound as a prudential maxim, the proverb "Honesty is the best policy" degrades a virtue. Policy has always a self-reference. It may still be egoism even when the conception of self is enlarged by the claims of family. Success may be the deity which beckons at the goal of a man's labours. Success means material power to carry the burden of human responsibility without weariness. The struggle to succeed is the effort to surmount the pain of struggle, to build golden pillars such as will take the pressure of living off one's shoulders. It is an attempt to convert life into an unalloyed joy by extracting the sting from it. A little serious reflection, and the futility of it soon becomes apparent. True joy cannot be reached by the elimination of that which constitutes the very essence of life. To imagine so is what Jesus calls "the deceitfulness of riches." It is the very pain of striving, "the sting in the wine of being, salt of its feast," which, in the morally strong soul, bravely accepting the struggle, becomes transmuted into joy.

The logic of life has, therefore, forced us up to a yet higher rung of the ladder of aspiration in our

Divine Vocation in Human Life

search for the ultimate meaning of vocation. A man may become utterly self-forgetting in listening to the call of home. Home is an idea consisting of subtle, invisible, spiritual relations which are among the most sacred of human possessions. In these a man's private self may be merged and lost. Joyfully accepting the pain of struggle, he may spend himself wholly in securing the true well-being of the objects of his love. Here at last a truly moral conception of life emerges. His vocation has become the life-task through which he is answering the summons of human love.

But at this point we are led swiftly to a further enlargement of the conception of vocation from the point of view of end or purpose. A man in morally fulfilling the summons of the more immediate social bonds of home, realizes by-and-by that it is not a case of his family versus other families; that his family's welfare, so far from involving the detriment of other family groups in the community, is altogether conditioned by the common weal of the society within which his home finds its life. And the call which comes to him out of the heart of his own home becomes enriched by new notes which creep into the ear of his soul out of the social life around it. The call of the need of the community blends with the call of his family's need. And his conception of his life's task is transformed into this deepened conception of vocation as the call of

The Conception of Vocation

human society embodied in the nation or state to make himself its servant, a good citizen working for its welfare. The General Will, the larger life of the state, the political individual, finding a voice for itself in the love-circle round his hearth, speaks to his own inner personal life and summons him to his life task.

In the light of this, the ideal of success in business becomes displaced by the ideal of service. Service, it has been said, constitutes at once the *raison d'être* and the sanction of business, the criterion by which it must be judged. Labour in this view would cease to be regarded as "wage-slavery." "To lose sight of the fact that work faithfully and honestly executed has a reward to the doer of it, and to society, entirely irrespective of the monetary value, is to miss one of the factors that constitute the merit and significance of service."¹

In other words, we here come face to face with that concrete embodiment of the moral Ideal which F. H. Bradley has described in the now classical phrase "my station and its duties." Consider for a moment what it implies. Moral action is the effort to realize the Ideal. But the Moral Ideal of speculative enquiry is usually some vague abstraction, far off, infinitely high, and within finitude nowhere, actually existing. It is something which claims to be

¹ Address by A. T. McRobert, Chairman of the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

universal, the one law of action valid for all men, but never realized, never making immediate contact with the limited and conditioned life of the individual. And there awakens an intense desire in the soul that this Ideal might be found to be somehow, somewhere real; that this which is only an "ought" for the individual should be for some larger life an "is." "My station and its duties" in a measure satisfies that demand. It is an organized and positive plan of life, to a great extent made concrete and actual in the social good of the community. Morality, thus understood, begins to have—at a distance—something of the characteristics of religion. For the demand of the religious soul is that the Moral Ideal must be real, and the last reality in the Universe.

The soul as religious claims that it is not good in its own right at all, but in the right of this Greater Life with which it identifies itself. "My station and its duties" is a distant adumbration or reflection of this ultimate Ideal. For, like the Supreme Good, the social organism not only demands, through this embodiment of the Ideal, the unconditional subordination of the individual to the service of the whole, but also gives the individual the assurance that he signifies something special, and, in his own sphere, irreplaceable.

The Conception of Vocation

III

Nevertheless this conception of vocation as "my station and its duties" speedily begins to betray its incompleteness as a final embodiment of the Ideal. On the one hand, as Eucken points out, the individual objects to being dependent for his life on his political organism, and desires to enter into direct relationship with the Whole, so winning for himself a secure superiority to all visible order. This individualism, he suggests, was one of the marked features of the Renaissance and the Reformation. On the other hand, "the whole body of ideas . . . developed . . . in social and historical life loses its spiritual character at once if it be not continually filled with new life through the work of individuals, more particularly of great personalities".¹ For the realization of the social good in a community is always more or less imperfect.

The moral heroes and saints in every society are always ahead, and sometimes far ahead, of their society. For them the moral Ideal begins again to float off from the social life as realized among men, and to pass once more into the region of the unrealized. They feel the task laid upon them, to seek to lead the society or state to which they belong out

¹ "Main Currents of Modern Thought," (Eng. Tr., p. 193), where also Eucken argues that in the social whole spirituality does not maintain itself by virtue of its mere existence, but only through continual renewal, an unceasing creation.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

beyond the present actual social good to something better—its ideal self. They cannot consent to a view which sets their own state in antagonism to, and collision with, other states. That degraded form of patriotism which pits “my country, right or wrong” against other nations makes no appeal to them. No doubt the first attitude of the true patriot to his country is not pride but reverence. It ought to humble a man to recognize that he belongs to the land of Lincoln, the land of Dante, the land of Shakespeare. But reverence for the past ought not to mean slavish subjection to a dead hand, but free emulation of the living spirit which animated that past and still inspires the present. The real patriot accordingly is the man who, in the light of a true ideal for his country, can be ashamed of his country when she stoops to mean and ignoble acts which mar and disrupt the concord and brotherhood of nations.

One form which this criticism of the life of the body politic may take in the mind of the man possessed with a high sense of vocation is that of a reaction in the interests of nationality against the political organization or state under which he lives. In this submerged or imperfectly realized ideal he may hear his call to service. One of the earliest results of the Great War was the recovery of this ideal of nationality by groups or communities, many of them long subjected to dominating states, yet

The Conception of Vocation

preserving that corporate unity which is entitled to the name of nation. More frequently than not a state includes more than one nation, for the state—the political organization under which groups live—is often dynastic and imperialistic.

It is of this form of political organisation President Masaryk is thinking when, in his manifesto "*The New Europe*," he says, "The nation is a democratic organism,—each individual is *called*, each one may make himself felt; while the state is an autocratic organism, compelling, suppressing." The principle of nationality he defines as "love for the mother-tongue and for the group of men speaking the same or nearly related language, and for the soil on which this group lives, and for the manner how it lives." One of the ideals to which the voices of the Maid of Orleans called her was the kinship of a common tongue.¹ Nationalism thus defined is "modern patriotism, different from the old patriotism of loyalty to the dynasty and the ruling classes." Patriotism, wrongly envisaged, may well be, as Dr. Johnson says, "the last refuge of the scoundrel." But the claim of right on the part of each separate nation to live its own life freed from the tyranny of imperialistic domination is a high and noble claim.

Nevertheless, while it may satisfy the group or the community which forms the nation, it cannot

¹ For a fine emphasis on this point see "Saint Joan," by G. B. Shaw.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

remain for the individual in his highest moments the ultimate source of the sense of vocation. Another of the heroic calls which have sounded loudly through the welkin of our modern world as an after-effect of the European War is the ideal of internationalism. And many to-day are hearing in it their vocation or call to service. Carried away by it, men sometimes regard it as superseding the ideal of nationalism. But when a nation has rightly discerned what it means to live its own life, there is in reality no antagonism between the two ideals. Only internationalism also must be rightly conceived. It must not be identified with cosmopolitanism in the baser sense of that word. While there is a true cosmopolitanism, in which the man familiar with many countries can be the just critic of his own, there is a type of cosmopolitanism which is not a healthy condition of mind. The man who is a friend of every country *but* his own may be as great a menace as the man who takes as his motto "my country, right or wrong."

It is jingoistic imperialism—the instinct of the group for expansion—not nationalism, to which internationalism is opposed. A true internationalism must indeed be founded on nationalism. As Herder, the "high priest of humanity," said, "Nations are the natural organs of humanity." Thus in a true internationalism uniformity by imperialistic domination must give way to unity by specialization, each

The Conception of Vocation

nation performing for the rest the service it is best fitted to render. It is true of all departments of life that individualization progresses *pari passu* with organization. Humanity is not super-national: it is the organization of individual nations, each of which has found the special service it can render to the whole.

We are here thinking of community-vocation rather than of individual vocation. And though it is in a measure a digression from our main theme, it is worth while pursuing it a little further. The existence of group-vocations must be recognized. Men who hear a common call often band themselves together in associations, the aim of which is the achievement of the ideal or purpose which they all share. In these instances it is the vocation which creates the association. And although the apprehension of the vocation is governed and limited by the common mind of the group, we must in a sense look beyond the community for the source of the vocation. But in nationalism we are still dealing with a case where it is out of the life of the pre-existing community that the call to service comes. And it is this, even where there is in view the wider claims of internationalism, which still links the ideal with fact.

A familiar statement of the relation between nationalism and internationalism is found in the words of Mazzini: "We believe in the holy alliance of the peoples; in the liberty and equality of the peoples,

Divine Vocation in Human Life

without which no true association can exist ; in nationality which is the conscience of the peoples, and which, by assigning to them their part in the work of association, their function in humanity, constitutes their mission upon earth—that is to say, their individuality without which neither liberty nor equality is possible ; in the great fatherland,—cradle of nationality, altar and workshop of the individuals of whom each people is composed.”

Nationality is a mission, declares the great patriot ; and the mission of the nations is to humanity—the holy alliance of the peoples. The action and reaction between the individual nation and the association of nations is mutual. On the one hand, in the discovery of its special mission or vocation by each, all the nations will discover their partnership one with another.¹ On the other hand the emergence of a true conception of internationalism will make still more possible the division of labour among the nations, and its integration into a single system. This ought to be true in the world of industry and commerce, whence collision and conflict for the most part arise. For each nation has its own resources and opportunities, predestining it to supply some special part of the world's need. It is, and has been, strikingly true of the cultural

¹ In the life of India to-day the growth of nationalism is beginning to produce a sense of world-wide vocation, as e.g. in Rabindranath Tagore's idea of a world-University. India's philosophical and religious heritage leads rather to Pantheism, in which the meaning of multiplicity in nations as in individuals is lost. Contact with Western thought is working the change.

The Conception of Vocation

labour of the world, in which nations are called to be the quickening breath rather than the shaping hands of humanity,—one to bring to its height man's sense of beauty, as Greece did, one to teach the world order and law, as Rome did, one to lead men to God, as did the Hebrew race.

It is in this cultural department of the world's work that the sense of national vocation emerges into clear consciousness. For it is the soul of a nation that speaks through its highest literature, and in so doing makes its greatest contribution to humanity. We are led back here from the vocation of the group to that of the individual. For the greatest figures in literature are the most intensely national, Dante, Molière, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, and the mighty voices of ancient Israel, Greece and Rome. "It was," said G. K. Chesterton¹ "when Burns ceased to be national that he became least effective." And he went on to point out in illustration, that when Burns sings of "Edina, Scotia's darling seat," he leaves our hearts cold and dull as ditch-water. But when he sings, "The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith," every ardent native sees in his mind's eye that historic coast-line. And it was when he sang in his broadest doric, that we caught sight of the vision of the day, when

"Man to man the warld owre
Shall brithers be for a' that."

¹ Address to London Burns Club.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

But it is just here also that we find the sense of vocation rising prophetically to a higher level than the voices of nationality or internationality. There are times when society, even in its highest form of organisation, no longer co-operates with the moral hero and martyr in carrying out the command of the Ideal, in fulfilling vocation. There are times that call for a prophetic voice to waken the slumbering conscience of humanity. Where then must such an one turn to listen to the summons to service? To his own highly purified and enriched conscience? Yes, truly. But his soul demands that the voice of conscience shall not merely be the voice of his own solitary self. There must also be the voice of some Higher Reality, which assents, and gives its imprimatur, to the voice of conscience.

This has sometimes been sought for in an apotheosis of Humanity, rich with all the insights and discoveries that have come through sublime achievement, through tragedy, through sacrifice, in the course of history. There has been instituted, indeed, a worship or cult of Humanity, with its calendar of the torch-bearers of the race. But Positivism has no ultimately satisfying creed to offer to man. For one thing, "the human race, as such, is only an aggregate, not even an organism. We might as well try to love an indefinitely extended post-office directory."¹

¹ Dr. J. E. McTaggart.

The Conception of Vocation

For another thing, even if it were possible to maintain that humanity is one organism animated by a single life, still it has to be admitted that Humanity is something far less than the universe, the whole of things. This cult therefore offers as an object of worship a finite part of the all-embracing Unity which the soul demands, something whose corporate earthly immortality is, to say the least of it, very problematic, and something which is itself subject to the laws of growth and development. To quote G. K. Chesterton again, "It is evidently impossible to worship Humanity, just as it is impossible to worship the Savile Club. Both are excellent institutions to which we may happen to belong. But we perceive clearly that the Savile Club did not make the stars, and does not fill the Universe. And it is surely unreasonable to attack the doctrine of the Trinity as a piece of bewildering mysticism, and then to ask men to worship a being who is ninety millions of persons in one God, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." And if, in view of the growing and changing nature of human society, we substitute for Humanity as it exists, including its rich heritage from the past, the Humanity of the future, the ideal of what Humanity may become, we are at once landed with a conception which has no satisfying basis short of a Divine Source, the Community of all souls in God, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

IV

The Kingdom of Heaven does no doubt in a sense give us the goal of our enquiry. The ultimate sanction of all Vocation is to be sought for within the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is an Ideal which has reality for the religious man. For it is partially realized on earth, and wholly realized in the life of God. But it is not through attainment of the vision of the Kingdom that we reach the experience of being called. Rather it is through a prior experience of God that we attain our assurance of the Kingdom. So when the man who has not yet reached an experience of God pierces dimly beyond the cult of Humanity merely to a hoped-for Kingdom, he has not yet attained a concrete embodiment of the Ideal as the authority from which his call to service proceeds. It is still but a vision born of the soul's own wrestling. Is there a yet undiscovered path along which he may meet the Master of Life, and hear His summons to service ?

One practical solution which has sometimes been found for this masterlessness of the soul is in the identification of oneself with some great cause such as national sobriety, social purity, industrial justice, world-peace, human equality and fraternity, civil or religious liberty. In their ardour such men as assume the burden of any of these causes would almost hypostatize their cause, loyally making

The Conception of Vocation

themselves its slaves, listening to its demands as their summons to a vocation. When Charles I. stalked into the House of Commons and demanded the surrender of some of its members, Lenthal, the Speaker of the House, dropping on his knees before his sovereign, said, "Your Majesty, I am the servant of this House, and as such I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak save as this House shall command, and I beg your Majesty's pardon if I can give no other answer." Even so, men who have consecrated themselves to a cause have often neither tongue to speak, nor feet to move, nor hands to act, save as the cause shall command. Nay, their life and death are entirely at its service. And indeed the noblest type of fanaticism is not where you have chosen your cause, but where the cause, as it were, chooses you, not where you resolve to serve your cause, but where you are guided and led to action by it.

Yet such a practical solution, however noble and compelling, cannot be final. Devotion to a cause as such is a passion rather than a vocation in the higher religious sense of the term. The call of the cause is not something which has spiritual reality in its own right alone. In the case of nearly every devoted life that has rendered conspicuous and far-reaching social service, the soul has acknowledged, to itself at least, that the cause derives its authority and sanction from some spiritual Reality behind

Divine Vocation in Human Life

and beyond it. Some have expressed their conviction vaguely as a "belief in Life." They acknowledge in one form or other that the cause can only make absolute claim for the surrender of the individual's whole life, when they feel that it has the Universe on its side. It is this that Professor Josiah Royce suggests when he argues that the supreme ethical principle is "loyalty to Loyalty."

Higher than loyalty to the cause is loyalty to the very Spirit of Loyalty itself, which Spirit is the central principle, the essential character of the Universe—loyalty not merely of individual to individual, or of each individual to the Whole, but Loyalty of the Whole to the individuals that compose it. The Universe is not merely friendly, not merely hospitable to the actions of consecrated souls, but loyal with a responsive loyalty. Loyalty however, is a personal category. When we postulate a Spirit of Loyalty in the Universe we are asserting that the ultimate Principle of Unity is a self-conscious Individual. And this means that we have reached the goal of our enquiry into the meaning of Vocation. Vocation is the call to serve some end in the life of the world, a call which comes to a man out of the heart of the Reality in which he finds himself, a call which in the last resort comes from the Will of the Infinite Personal Life, which Reality ultimately discloses itself to be. Vocation is thus the supreme category of Religion.

The Conception of Vocation

Let us now seek to sum up the discussion of this chapter by stating our conclusion in line with the suggestions of the previous chapter. We have reached the conception that there is an ultimate spiritual Reality which authenticates and justifies the summons of the Ideal in conscience. The sanction of the Ideal lies wrapped up in the very nature and essence of the Universe. There is a supreme Purpose at work in the world, and a cosmic end or goal to which the whole creation ought to move and is moving. There is a Universal Mind and Will by which that cosmic Ideal has been willed—
—in which it is already realized. And that Divine Will is still active in the world, immanent in the entire process of Nature, incarnate in the march of mankind, and enshrined and calling in the human conscience. The whole process of evolution, as we watch it in Nature, is just a mighty act of will on the part of such a Spirit, translating His own thoughts into actuality and life. The whole process of the rise of human consciousness out of the brute into all the complexity of civilization, as we watch it in History, is just this same transcendent act of will, integrating itself into many finite centres of personal life, which in responding to the call of the Moral Ideal as they work out their own life-purposes, are fulfilling a fragment of the Infinite Design. “It is out of the clash of these inevitable conditions of life, in which God utters Himself, that

Divine Vocation in Human Life

we and our consciousness are struck like sparks." In some sense it seems true that "God sleeps in Nature, dreams in the animal and wakes in man." And if through the ages this one increasing purpose runs, it is not unreasonable to suggest that there are events of history, particular lives, which are specially related to that purpose.

The distinctive feature of the Divine Being is to seek; the very truth of the time-process is that the Oversoul has been seeking to evoke from His creation that which shall be able to render back to Him out of the heart of finitude a personal response to His infinite Quest; that which shall be able at length to ask: "What Divine gift wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life? My Poet, is it Thy delight to see Thy creation through my eyes, and to stand at the portals of my ears, silently to listen to Thine own eternal harmony? Thy world is weaving words in my mind, and Thy joy is adding music to them; Thou givest Thyself to me in love, and then feelest Thine own eternal sweetness in me."¹

Yes, God has been seeking through creation to produce individuals, and to lift them through ever-ascending planes of consciousness, until the veil of finitude becomes diaphanous, and the soul cries, "I have found Thee, who hast ever been seeking me; Thou hast revealed Thyself to me who have

¹ Rabindranath Tagore: "Gibanjali."

The Conception of Vocation

ever been seeking Thee." Truth, it has been said, must be a Person seeking us, if we are to seek Him. And His quest is,—not merely to fashion other centres of personality in finitude, but supremely to reveal Himself in a personal way to us, His children. Not merely to awaken a responsive love in beings whom He has made to be the objects of His love, by bringing them to know Him, but also to lead them to realize through personal communion that they are "known of Him" (to quote St. Paul's striking after-thought),—nay, that they are being summoned, called by Him to become co-partners with Him in the infinite cosmic service.

CHAPTER II

Criticism of the Conception

THE religious view of life as a Divine calling is not without its difficulties, and indeed lies open to serious criticism in more than one direction. The more important of these must now be considered.

I

The view may be challenged as subversive of all the claims of morality; because, under the conception of vocation, a heteronomy is set up, and the autonomy of the will, essential in the moral life, abandoned. We are here face to face with a form of the old contradiction between morality, which demands freedom, and religion, which affirms that God is in all human life.¹ For in every true vocation there are two centres of conscious life, two wills involved, the absolute Will of God, and that of the finite individual called; and the Divine calling seems the imposing of God's will on man's. Now the Moral law can never be an external authority.

¹ For an instructive discussion of this see "A Faith that Inquires," by Prof. Sir Henry Jones, chaps. viii. and ix.

Criticism of the Conception

It only binds itself on us when we recognize it as dictated by our own consciences, and, as such, reasonable and right for us. "My duty," Professor Royce puts it, "is simply my own will brought to my clear self-consciousness." And indeed a man is a mere cog in the social machine until he has thought his way, and lived his way, through to freedom, moral autonomy.

But what does this freedom ultimately mean? It consists precisely in identification with the moral ideal. And the moral ideal finds its perfect realization only in the Will of God. It is argued by Prof. Sir Henry Jones,¹ that if on the one hand we affirm nothing but the unity of the Divine and the human will, or if on the other hand we affirm nothing but their independence, religion becomes impossible. But "the truth is the union of wills can only take place if they are independent. It is their concurrence that makes them one, and they cannot concur if either of them is not free. . . . Nothing can unite wills except the adoption of the same purpose by free agents. And the adoption of a purpose is an affair of the individual as a separate being." We may adapt Augustine's great word to our theme. It is in God's will that our wills find their true rest and peace, because God has so made us for Himself that our wills are restless outside His. Our restless wills set before themselves an

¹ *Ibid.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

ideal the achieving of which would mean peace, satisfaction. That ideal is just our own wills brought to clear self-consciousness. But the religious soul recognizes that this ideal state of its own will is precisely harmony with God's Will. Thus, in vocation, God's unveiling of His own will to us, His summoning us to effect part of His purpose, is not a relentless act of sovereignty, it is a condescending act of Grace.

Our surrender of our own wills—the responsive act of faith—to this revelation is not an abdication of freedom, but the highest act of freedom leading to the only life of perfect freedom. For so we identify ourselves—in desire at least—with that ideal satisfaction, that peace of achievement towards which it is the very life of our wills to struggle. Not that the hearing and answering of the Divine call means an end of effort. It is rather the transmutation of effort into work which is rest indeed. Moral endeavour does not cease with the achievement of religious vision. As the bee poised on the wing at the heart of the flower labours still in the joyous moment of achievement, so here and now in the moment of responding to the Divine call one wins a foretaste of that rest “that remaineth unto the people of God,” in which “they rest not day nor night.” There is therefore no insuperable difficulty in this apparent heteronomy in vocation, or in the call of the Divine Will, to answer which

Criticism of the Conception

faith urges us. "Faith," says Principal Forsyth, "is not a thing but a freedom. It is a moral soul coming to itself. It is coming therefore to the freedom which is the unique badge of the soul, coming to the higher freedom for which the lower was made. If it was a Divine thing to create a man free, a freewill, it is a Divine thing to emancipate that first freedom."¹

II

More difficult to meet is the objection at the opposite end of the scale, that, since in this view every man's life is consciously or unconsciously a fragment of the Plan of God, no room seems left for the reality of moral evil. This is the crux of all ethical theory: either morality is something final and absolute, and evil is real; or morality is a stage to be transcended, and "good" is not an ultimate category. It would take us too far from the main line of our enquiry to enter on the general question. But a few notes may be offered on certain aspects of the problem which bear on our theme.

And it is pertinent to remind ourselves here that the view of morality and religion suggested by this conception of vocation is not a pantheistic one. Vocation is essentially a personal category. It involves the reality of finite individuals endowed with freedom of choice. It demands the reality

¹ "The Principle of Authority."

Divine Vocation in Human Life

of a personal God. The moral being, man, is not merely a "moment" through which the Absolute Idea passes on its way to perfect self-realization. And in whatever sense morality may be transcended in the perfect life, it cannot amount, on this view, to disannulment in "a morass of Being where holy and horrible are alike nothing." All human action which belongs to the region of conscience must lie in the very gateway through which human finitude passes into the heart of the Divine. "The solemn reality which sin—guilt—is in this region," says Professor Denney, "cannot be absorbed in any cosmic process, natural or spiritual. It is not itself an element in any such process; it has essentially the character of action and responsibility, and it can only be transcended by an act in which it is judged and destroyed."

But apart from the evil which belongs to the sphere of human freedom, is there evil, entering into the very constitution of the universe, in such a way as to deny and contradict the fact of vocation? Neither evolution nor any other natural law sheds any light on some of the worst mysteries of *pain*, "the long torments of the incurable, the tortures of the innocent, the existence of so many gratuitously agonizing forms of death." Only the presence of an experience of pain and sacrifice in the Divine Life does in any way mitigate the

Criticism of the Conception

intensity of this problem. In the light of this, these human sufferings may form part of the stuff awaiting moral transformation by the heroic soul. And many men and women of higher nature have not only eagerly accepted pain, but even attained liberty, entered amazing joys, learned the secrets of the Universe, through suffering. They have, so to speak, converted pain into a vocation. "Do you not see," said Keats, "how *necessary* a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and *make it a real soul*?"

Again, the arm of *circumstance* in other forms has often held men back from tasks to which they had felt an inner call, and compelled them to occupy some narrower sphere. The warping or constricting of soul which sometimes ensues might seem to point to some cosmic evil that thwarts, or even denies that there is providence in life. No final explanation of such interference of circumstance can be found, short of regarding this life as a probation-span, a preparation for unrestricted activity in a larger life hereafter. But this much may be added, that such warping of soul as sometimes ensues is no necessary result of the long probation. "The iron entered his soul,"¹ it is said concerning Joseph, "until the time came that his cause was known." But it is the reaction of a man's

¹ The familiar phrase from the Prayer Book version of the Psalter is hardly warranted by the Hebrew.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

soul to the hampering circumstance which determines whether the iron strengthens or embitters, or does both. Circumstance itself may be non-moral, merely forming the stuff for the possibility of good or evil.

Again, *broken purposes* or purposes unattained need not necessarily imply evil in the nature of things. There is such a thing as God's second best made manifest in many a broken life, and it may blossom into a flower that sheds a nobler fragrance into the social atmosphere than would the life left whole have done. Professor Bosanquet suggests, in mitigation of part at least of the mystery of unfulfilled promise, the co-operative element in the continuous web of experience. "Men who are considerable originators, and influence a wide circle, are prevented from producing, and reach the world only as the components of other personalities. . . . By unnoticed contributions to the common mind very much is preserved which seems to have perished, and in some cases perhaps the half has been more than the whole."¹

The reason why some men do more or less involuntarily fail to respond to the Divine calling may sometimes be found within the moral sphere. There are many instances in life where a man's "call" remains undiscovered right to the end, or at least till late in life. It may in part be due to a

¹ "The Value and Destiny of the Individual," Vol. I, p. 21f.

Criticism of the Conception

man's own failure to make the most of his moral opportunities. But frequently it is not so. It may be due to a *faulty social environment*. Even in such a situation, however, in so far as the man, according to his dimmed light, is following the path of duty, he may be fulfilling some worthy part of God's plan ; or his life may be a probation for the fulfilling of some task in the clearer light of an after-life. Sometimes indeed a man's real vocation may be that into which he was driven out of his own planned course. It has been said of Dante that "the spirit of faction never did a nobler service to the world than when Florence, that 'mother of little love' disowned her son, and flung him out upon the universal hopes and fears, sins, sorrows and aspirations of mankind, to steer his course by nothing lower than the steadfast stars."¹

None of the special cases so far mentioned runs counter to the conception of a Divine vocation in life. Indeed it is not the trials and tribulations which cross the path of most men some time or other in the pursuit of their calling that seriously challenge the conception. And Borrow's exhortation,² while by no means true for all men, should still find a responsive echo in many hearts. "O ye gifted ones, follow your calling. For however various your talents may be, ye can have but one calling capable of leading ye to

¹ Carrol : "Prisoners of Hope."

² Lavengro, xxi.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

eminence and renown ; follow resolutely the one straight path before you ; it is that of your good angel ; let neither obstacles nor temptations induce ye to leave it ; bound along if you can ; if not, on hands and knees follow it ; perish in it if needful ; but ye need not fear that ; no one ever yet died in the true path of his calling before he had attained the pinnacle. Turn into other paths, and for a momentary advantage or gratification ye have sold your inheritance, your immortality. Ye will never be heard of after death."

It is when we enter the sphere of the individual's own will, and proceed to examine the more or less deliberate failures to respond to the Divine calling, that we find the dark, mysterious core of the moral problem which confronts us in vocation. Even where the blame for an unredeemed life-purpose rests largely on some moral evil in the social environment we cannot leave wholly out of account the will of the individual concerned. No doubt some tragic betrayal of trust on the part of a fellow-man may cause the miasma of doubt to spread through a man's soul, till he cries with the Moor, "Othello's occupation's gone." But some flaw of passion, even in the great soul, is practically always present when disaster and shipwreck ensue.

Again, religious doubt is sometimes made the excuse for moral drifting. Because a man imagines he has seen through life and found it hollow and vain,

Criticism of the Conception

he lets his life become void of any dominant purpose. But has the drifter in every case genuinely faced up to the meaning and issues of life? May not the source of the evil lie in his own free choice of his course of conduct? Many a man, whose mental retina has a blind spot preventing him from seeing the light of life's Divine significance, has nevertheless heroically pursued his calling along lines of the highest morality, in a true sense fulfilling his task in a Divine plan which he does not acknowledge.

What, then, has the conception of vocation to say about those who have deliberately misconstrued life, who have failed to acknowledge purpose in it, misinterpreted it, marred it in mid course, left it unfulfilled, or defied all suggestion of purpose in it? Under one or other of these courses most forms of real moral evil in human life can be subsumed. And if God is co-operating with man, if He is working out His Supreme Plan through the intricate web of human life-purposes, and if every man's life consciously or unconsciously fulfils some fragment of God's Purpose, how can we reconcile these failures with this view? Can we accept through and through the hypothesis of a Divine predestination to service? Only if we could stand at God's point of view could we see the entire explanation of this problem. But we are not left without hints and glimpses sufficient to inspire in us the faith that life is ordered so.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

God is still calling to men even in the dregs of mis-spent opportunity. No one can ever put himself wholly outside the sweep of the Divine Purpose. Even the utterly evil life God uses to fulfil some purpose—a grim and tragic purpose. Though we cannot accept the crude belief of history's early dawn that God could raise up a Pharaoh and harden his heart that He might thereby find opportunity to display His might, we can nevertheless in some measure see how the evil man's "demonstration of the ugliness and barrenness of evil-doing has been on the whole a gain to the world."¹ There is a Divine irony in life. And though God's Plan may be retarded, it cannot be ultimately thwarted, either by individual, social, or national repudiation of His call.

But the solemn question may be asked, Does such a defiance of God's Will involve an ultimate dissolution of personality? It certainly means an incomplete and fragmentary personality. "The soul in its highest sense," says Henry Drummond, "is a vast capacity for God, . . . but without God, it shrinks and shrivels until every vestige of the Divine is gone, and God's image is left without God's Spirit. One cannot call what is left a soul: it is a shrunken, useless organ, a capacity sentenced to death by disuse, which droops as a withered hand by the side, and cumpers nature like a rotted branch."

¹ Jones: "A Faith that Inquires," p. 249

Criticism of the Conception

“A sinner, a seemingly blind expression of the World-Will, is only a person by courtesy,” Professor Royce declares. “An explicit personality is one that shows itself through deeds that embody a coherent ideal.” Spiritual death, extinction as an individual centre of conscious life, is at least the goal towards which all persons on the way of rebellion to the Divine Will are approximating. The soul that has practically extinguished the last spark of moral goodness within would, if redeemed here or hereafter, become a personality so utterly renewed as to be in effect a new creation. The views of conditional immortality and “the larger hope” seem to meet at this extreme. Whatever the ultimate destiny of such souls, there can be no surd left in the universe when God has made the pile complete.

One last point may be glanced at. There is a sense in which, within this sphere of time, moral imperfection taints the performance of every soul, even the noblest fulfillers of vocation. “Can you be holy without accomplishing the end for which you are created?” asks Thomas Traherne.¹ “A dutiful will in a finite being is insatiable,” says Royce. “It consciously says, since this is my duty, nobody else in the Universe,—no, not God, in so far as God is other than myself,—can do this

¹ “A Century of Meditations,” I, 12. cf. Schleiermacher's view that nothing done outside the sphere of vocation can be reckoned a “good work.”

Divine Vocation in Human Life

duty for me. My duty I must myself do. And wherever in time I stand, I am dissatisfied with what is so far done. . . . In me, as now I am, God is dissatisfied with Himself in so far as now He is partially expressed in me." More than once we have found the moral anomalies and imperfections of this life pointing towards a future life. It is surely a false doctrine that "man is a bridge not a goal." It is in the thought of an endless future that Royce seems to find the solution of the phase of the problem presently before us. "This personal warfare with my own maladjustment to my ideal—that is my personality. . . . In me, the temporal being, in me now, God is in need, is hungry, is thirsty, is in prison. But God is Absolute. Eternity is His. He must be satisfied. Divine satisfaction is attained not by ignoring, either now or hereafter, the voluntary individual expression. Seen from the Eternal point of view, my personal life must be an endless series of deeds."

III

But the most serious practical difficulty with which this conception of vocation is faced has to do with the question of degrees of significance among earthly vocations. Our particular problem here is to show how, amid the multitudinous callings which crowd and jostle each other, and between which such jealousies often exist, the obscure and humble avocations—callings which seem to have but a meagre

Criticism of the Conception

contribution to pay to the main stream of the great world-process, as it moves towards its Divine end—can be integrated within Vocation, in the religious meaning of the word.

It may be easy for the man who has been apprehended in a great religious experience—the convert, the prophet, the mystic—to recognize his life as a call to fulfil a task for God—to view his calling, however lowly, as done under the great Taskmaster's eye. It may be comparatively easy for a great statesman or soldier,—one who has been a pivotal force in the march of history—to perceive the place of his life in the Plan of God. At any rate it may be easy for a later observer to see how God had girded him even though he had not known Him. It may be easy for the scientist, the discoverer of the laws and harmonies of the universe; or the poet, the man who pierces beyond the wild, aimless, and untoward things of life to its unities and beauties, and records these as his answers to the dark questionings of man—it may be easy for such to feel, or for others to discern, that they have been specially chosen vessels into which the secrets of God and His world were poured.

But when one descends to the humdrum, sometimes sordid, and often grim, business of living, in the world of toiling and trafficking, and especially to the tasks at the lower end of this industrial region of life, it is by no means so easy for the worker to

Divine Vocation in Human Life

hear the Divine Voice in the task to which his hand must daily turn. One feature of this sphere of the labour world is its specialization. And the higher the specialization the more limited seems to become the range of purposiveness. Some trades, of course, are intimately linked with life's daily necessities—shelter, clothing and food. It is easy to read some measure of purpose into the work of the mason, the joiner, the blacksmith, the farmer, the gardener, the cobbler, the tailor, the merchant, the sailor. There is a certain lonely individuality about even such comparatively trivial occupations as those of the umbrella-mender, the knife-grinder, and the tinker. Lowly and unattractive as are the tasks of the scavenger, the char, the washer-woman, the chimney-sweeper, the rag-picker, and the vermin-killer, they have to do with cleanliness which makes for health and is neighbour to godliness. But in the more highly specialized industrial world a man may spend his days polishing bone buttons or filing needle-points. And the problem, even for the onlooker, of connecting a life-task outwardly so stripped of significance, with the summons of the social Ideal, the Supreme Good—the finding of a unique place for such in the life of the world, the chance of discovering in it a call of God to service,—seems well-nigh impossible. How then shall we endow the insignificant task of the obscure toiler with all the uniqueness and universality of a Divine

Criticism of the Conception

vocation ? How, rather, may we bring out into the light these characteristics, which, we are persuaded, they already possess ?

Let it at once be granted that so long as there are certain types of industry created by those cravings of mankind which are artificial, diseased and evil, the work of the men engaged in them can hardly in any sense be called vocational. Extravagant ornamentation, cruel sport, alcoholic excess, all harmful luxury, are obvious types of those cravings and follies. Everything that violates the just demands of beauty, goodness and truth, be it even the chiselling of false epitaphs on tombstones, must come under this condemnation. Again, so long as industry and commerce are shot through with injustice and corruption, it is impossible for all the workers to reach the vision of the Divine meaning of life. It is not a question of monotony. The fact is too often ignored that practically every life—not the obscure worker's only, but even that of the sublimest thinker—wears a double aspect, of outward drudgery as well as inward significance. "I have ever viewed all my work and accomplishments," said Goethe, "as no more than mere symbols ; and in my deepest experience it seemed to me pretty much the same whether I made pots or pans." The difficulty, however, is that whereas in the thinker's case the significance of vocation is obvious, in the case of the artisan drudgery seems to be the whole.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

A beginning, however, may be made in the discovery of the significance of the lowly but legitimate and honest task when it is remembered that even the most minutely standardized occupation arises directly or indirectly in answer to some social demand. And such a demand is the expression of a necessity. Each occupation, therefore, is necessary to the whole and to all the other occupations within the whole. St. Paul's great analogy of the body and its members might well be set as the charter for the social gospel of Christianity, and for the theory of vocation. "God has set the members of the body each as it pleased Him. If they all made up one member, what would become of the body? As it is, there are many members and one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'"

If St. Paul were alive to-day and at work in some of our industrial communities he might reverse his way of putting it. In some communities the hand and the foot are not only claiming but attempting to dispense with the eye and the head. Doubtless the reason is because we have failed to apply to the body politic the Divine principle which St. Paul enunciated for the Mystical Body in the same passage: "We cannot do without those very members of the body which are considered rather delicate, just as the parts we consider rather

Criticism of the Conception

dishonourable are the very parts we invest with special honour ; our indecorous parts get a special care and attention which does not need to be paid to our more decorous parts. God has tempered the body together with a special dignity for the inferior parts, so that there may be no disunion in the body, but that the various members should have a common concern for one another. Thus if one member suffers, all the members share its suffering ; if one member is honoured all the members share its honour."

But so far are we from carrying out this ideal in the body politic, that we are almost fain to consider the lives that fulfil mean and lowly and disesteemed purposes as part of the problem of evil. If the transfiguring light of religion fell on them, we would see that it is our contempt and disregard of them that is evil and wrong. Ought we not to pay the scavenger and the dustman special honour ? And while we do not deny the rightness of the rule that skilled labour shall be highly paid, may it not be right that the men of these lowlier callings should be paid a wage higher in proportion to the disagreeable nature of the task they have to perform ? When all is said, the cleansing agencies of life are the agencies making for wholesomeness and health, which lie close to the holiness of God. In the secular life as in the spiritual, are there not last which should be first ?

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Further, if every task arises to satisfy some social demand, and if demand is the expression of need, supply may be said to be the expression of service. The economic law of supply and demand can be translated into the social law of need and service. And service is the moral law of the kingdom of heaven. When all real needs are met by service, there will be the true economic equation.

It will be asked, Is this as far as we can go in interpreting the lowly vocation? When we have indicated their necessity and interdependence within the scheme of human service, shall we have satisfied the worker himself that there breathes through it a Divine call? Can we discover any further marks of an heavenly imprimatur on these callings? The only satisfying answer to these questions would involve a consideration of each vocation separately. But by the aid of a few illustrative examples we may be able to suggest principles of interpretation, directions towards which we should turn for insight.

The routine of a policeman's life would seem to amount to the travelling of a certain length of road in certain hours, and when there is excitement, it is concerned with human wreckage, the flotsam and jetsam of society. Yet nobody observes a policeman on the street without being oppressed by a sensation which wears a grotesque resemblance to the emotion of awe. Why is it not reserved for the criminal alone to feel this? Is it not because a

Criticism of the Conception

policeman, solid as he may look, is in reality nothing but a spiritual idea? Blue coat and baton are visible symbols, standing for all the majesty of the State judicature. The sense of the presence of authority which passes you in his person on the street creates that emotion akin to awe in your soul. Divested of his symbols, he is "a featherless biped" like other mortals. But precisely through his calling his life is linked in a very obvious way with the social good. The state is the instrument through which the call of the infinite holiness behind all social justice comes to him.

Take again the lamplighter, alas, rapidly disappearing in this age of electric switches and buttons. His duties are simple and mechanical, demanding a minimum of mental output. Yet but for the lighting of the city streets, the tale of accidents which bring desolation to homes, of crimes which ruin souls (for men love darkness when their deeds are evil), would be vastly increased. Light is a shining example of the material substructure on which much of our morality is supported. So God speaks to the lamplighter through the civic council, saying, "Let there be light."

Soap again is another of those material trivialities upon which morality rests. The soap-maker, mixing his oils and greases, may often be inclined to think his task a God-forsaken one. Yet the penetrating suggestion has been made that "the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

superiority of the English to the rest of mankind may be more closely connected with their insistence on soap than we think. One never feels quite so bad a man after washing as before it. And the better the soap the better the deed."

In the same way, it may be shown that our needle-grinder is essential to the tailor. And "clothes," says our own prophet Carlyle, "have made men of us."

These all belong to one main group of vocations which draw their significance from the infinite Holiness behind life. A few illustrations may be added from a large group which finds its consecration in the infinite Love.

There is an outward monotony about a postman's duty: round after round, and nearly always the same round, seeing that certain pieces of paper with certain marks are delivered at certain doors. Yet inwardly regarded, is he not a link in the tremendous network of destiny? Apart from the wars, revolutions, and fates of empires, which he may be one of the humbler instruments in deciding, does he not carry in his mystic bag the souls and hearts of men and women, untold sorrow, undreamed-of joy? He is an embodiment of the endless social yearnings of the race, a symbol of the fraternity of humanity. Behind all human loves and hates, needs and desires, there sounds for him the undertone of the Divine Compassion with its call to service.

Criticism of the Conception

Consider also the coalman. Dirt-begrimed he hawks his goods with melancholy voice down mean streets. But the fire on the hearth is the altar-flame of one of the few abiding temples on the earth—the home. Love is fostered in its radiance. And as you listen to that world-weary voice, you may hear the echo of endless forgotten ages of a travailing earth, when primæval forests built their tissues out of air and sunshine, and then sank to rest in nature's bosom. In the coal-man God sees of the travail of far-off world movements (which are expressions of His own labouring Will), and is satisfied.

The sick-nurse has often vulgar and heart-rending work to do, but her doing of it is not vulgar. It is in the long run a response to the call of the sacredness of that mystery called life, and of the Divine Love which loved it into being.

IV

We do not, however, suggest that in the case of any of these workers, their calling is always, or even often, so apprehended by themselves. And the real problem, as it may now be fairly urged, is just how these lowly workers are to be brought to such a view of their calling.

In this connection it is perhaps natural to think first, in these days, of the outward conditions of

Divine Vocation in Human Life

labour. Has legislation no function to fulfil in restoring significance to vocation? The long battle for the democratization of legislative activity is for the most part over. The time has come for a new orientation of politics in the direction of the democratization of industrial activity, the increasing of the power of industrial self-government. A genuine self-government would produce conditions which would make difficult the exercise of motives which lead to the production of "shoddy"; it would help to restore the old spirit of craftsmanship and pride in one's work. For real self-government in industry would have as its end social service, the spiritual enrichment of all, whereas, though profit is not to be ruled out as an illegitimate motive, production for profit as the sole end means an effort to *be* served, to get rich out of the service of others. Real self-government, too, by giving the worker part-proprietorship in industry, would help to counteract the increasing mechanism, the standardization and specialization in the modern labour world, by providing a wider freedom for the exercise of the spirit of discovery and experiment.

Ruskin has shown how in Gothic masonry, where room was left for initiative, mechanical and often artistic perfection was sacrificed, but the manhood of the workman, still visible in the virility of the whole, was preserved. Self-government would help to establish "a harmony between the worker

Criticism of the Conception

and the material." It would open up the way to "a vision of the great co-operative effort which the world's work involves." It would provide opportunity for those desires and outreachings after the good life which all men share; it would give to men the opportunity of losing themselves in an imaginative life which concerns the good of all. For the consummation of service is fellowship. And "without freedom fellowship and service lose their fine sincerity; and the human spirit is hurt and maimed when its good-will is baffled."¹

But the indispensable accompaniment of every extension of self-government must be education. Democracy without education may be one of the greatest evils with which a community can be cursed. It is theoretically sound that bad self-government is preferable even to a benevolent autocracy, for self-government is itself a means of education. But the democracy that does not discover the need and value of sound education speedily becomes a prey to unscrupulous powers not only beyond, but within, its frontiers. Without education democracy is incapable of choosing the right men to rule, or of controlling the competent man who may accidentally be chosen. Education would give the power both of choice and of control. And true self-government in industry would sooner or later produce a higher sense of vocation. But,

¹ Elizabeth Stewart : *Welfare Work*.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

further, education would provide not only equality but equity of opportunity whereby it would become possible for the humblest to find his true place on the ladder of vocation, the niche where he can function to the full bent of his powers. Nevertheless, the "golden ladder" is not to be regarded as an admission that the lot of the manual worker is one from which men ought always to seek to escape. It is not an evil dream of bondage.

Every vocation is part of the Divine Plan. The educational ladder is merely the way by which a man may determine his vocation according to the gifts and capacities with which he is endowed, and not according to the material means of life at his own or his guardian's disposal. Only when a man has found his true niche, and knows it as the station he is best fitted for, may he hope to have the inner ear opened to the Divine voice summoning him to walk therein.

Contenting ourselves with this brief review of some of the outward aspects of the problem, we return now to the inward aspect, for it is here that the ground of all our hope of the individual recognition of the Divine summons must lie. And though it may sound too optimistic, we will dare to say that every worker, in so far as he is loyal to his calling, and to life's claims through his calling, does possess on the practical side of his soul a way of insight into the meaning of his vocation. Even in the

Criticism of the Conception

factory the conscientious needle-filer knows that every part of the vast activity of the workshop runs smoothly to the production of the completed machine only when each is faithful to his particular task. In a Clydeside shipbuilding yard, during the launching of a great Atlantic liner, a workman turned proudly to his neighbour, as he saw the boat majestically take the water, and said, "I drove the rivets on her." Questioned about their work, one stone-hewer said he was chiselling for his wages, another said he was trimming the stone, but a third said he was helping to build a cathedral.

But now pursue the needle-filer's case a little further. It may be presumed that he is a member, possibly a father, of a family. It is then the most rudimentary and external description of his life's task to say that it is the finishing of needle-points. Into his task there enters, as the most real element in it, the support of his home. The factory but provides him with the opportunity of exchanging his labour for the means of bringing comfort to his home, and of helping each member of it to take his or her place as an intelligent and loyal citizen of the land. He is a co-worker with the body politic in its main task, which is not the increasing of its material prosperity, but the making of good citizens. Thus in this aspect of his two-fold vocation he finds his niche in the purpose of the social whole. And the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

end for which the body politic labours is not, as we have seen, an ultimate end. In fulfilling the state's ideal of good citizenship, the individual is only using the opportunity which this scene of time presents, of making himself a completed individual, a being in full possession of his soul, fit for citizenship in the Kingdom of all souls, the Kingdom of heaven. This, his practical loyalty to life and its ties, dumb and inarticulate though that loyalty may be—an instinct of the conscience,—is his main way of insight into the Divineness of his vocation.

But even this does not exhaust the ways of insight into the inner meaning of vocation. So far we have sought relief from the pressure of the problem without calling in the aid of a man's personal religion,—that side of his life in which he devotes himself to a spiritual fellowship of worship. We remind ourselves now of one of the main distinctions between kinds of vocation—vocations that are consciously and directly religious vocations in the stricter sense of the term, and the more secular callings. It is precisely the task of those whose calling is a direct Divine vocation—the great mediating personalities of religion—to bring the lives of others into contact with the Spiritual World as they have apprehended it. And when God has thus drawn nigh to men, they are given a power whereby they may recognize the sacredness of their secular callings. It has not been

Criticism of the Conception

found impossible for the saint in homespun to realize that

“ Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.”¹

This way of finding consecration in one's calling is often challenged. Sweeping is always an insignificant and monotonous job. To seek to lift its monotony by a semi-mystical interpretation is, it is urged, a risky expedient. The monotony in work can never wholly be got rid of. To this we must agree. But surely it is a missing of the point when it is further urged that even the fact that work is done as in the service of the Highest does not make it fine. At any rate, if the thing done is not made fine, at least the action, the doing of it is made fine. And that is the main thing. Again the critic, while admitting that love is the law of our life, the soul of our aspiration, goes on to argue that love neither clothes us nor feeds us. And the problem set for our solution, the Divine problem of our earthly sojourn, is not the forsaking of the law of nature for the law of love, but their reconciliation. So he argues, and again we agree. But sweeping a room under a religious impulsion is not forsaking the law of nature for the law of love, it is obeying the

¹ One may perhaps be pardoned for recalling a humble instance. During a church conference in an English town, it was noticed that a lift-boy was taking a lively interest in a party of the leaders, which he was piloting. When thanked for his attention, he said bluntly but proudly, “I'm one on yer.” Through his interest in his church he felt that even in pressing a button he was doing something for the kingdom of God.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

call of necessity for love's sake only. It is in very truth their reconciliation.

And the religious motive is surely capable of application in the wider world of industry. It may be difficult, under the capitalist system as it at present exists, to feel that work can be anything more than wage-slavery. The principle of love must first be made to prevail throughout the entire range of the industrial order, from the master to the least-skilled hand. But we do not help matters by suggesting that capital is a morally wrong thing; nor yet by suggesting that capitalism—the doctrine of the necessity of capital—is wrong. "Capital," it has been pointed out, "is neither moral nor immoral. It is the stuff out of which morality is made. It is the material world claiming and inciting our energies, and we become moral in our response to it."

Where the capitalist so easily goes wrong is in thinking that the necessity for capital means the necessity that *he* should acquire more and still more capital. That naturally and inevitably calls forth the retaliatory policy of "ca' canny." Only as the capitalist begins to see the rightness of taking the workman more and more into his confidence in the stewardship of their common capital may we hope to approximate to a state in which all work will be interpreted in terms of love. It is wrong therefore to argue that religion is irrelevant. We need, not

Criticism of the Conception

less religion, but more, or a more highly moralized religion. From top to bottom, the industrial order needs revolutionizing by the inculcation of Christian principle. And it should begin at the top. It is because there is so much respectability at the top that we think otherwise, forgetting that respectability can cover a multitude of bad principles. When St. Paul urged the slaves to obey their masters as unto Christ, he did not forget to urge the masters to remember that *their* Master also was in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him; though it is questionable if St. Paul saw that in that very injunction lay the seed-germ of the abolition of slavery.

The aimlessness, the disillusionment, the unrest of our time is in large measure due to the neglect of these same principles, due to the age's irreligion. It was only to Christ-won and Christ-sanctified souls—souls for whom all things had become new, transfigured—that St. Paul could write, and thrill the recipients of the letter by writing, “As the human body is one and has many members, all the members of the body forming one body for all their number, so is it with Christ. For by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or freedmen; we have all been imbued with one Spirit.” It is only when every sphere of earthly activity is Christianized that every man will be able to see the infinite value of

Divine Vocation in Human Life

his own individuality, and of his vocation in the eyes of God.

And now, to sum up this wide-ranging chapter, which re-affirms the view that every man's life—at least every true man's life—is in some sense a Divine vocation, we must set out the main consequences in a two-fold emphasis. As such a vocation every true man's life is endowed with the two characteristics of uniqueness and universality. *Uniqueness*, because the cosmic purpose, being the expression of a single Absolute Will, is a unique purpose—not an infinite series of disjointed threads of purpose, but an infinite system of interrelated elements of purpose. It is one plan, and beside it there is no other cosmic plan. And just because each human fragment of purpose has its place within the unique purpose of God, each is, therefore, unique.

And the individual whose task it is to fulfil such a fragment of the Infinite Purpose shares its uniqueness. It is precisely this which constitutes the secret core of his individuality, because he is a functioning member of a body cosmic, spiritual, Divine. And wherever the worker sees that this his task is a unique task, in which he co-operates with the Divine Will in working out God's purpose, he transmutes his work into personal religion. The daring and sublime assertion of Antonio Stradivarius, the

Criticism of the Conception

violin maker, to some onlooker who disparaged his calling, is classical here: "God could not make another of these violins without Antonio."

"There is one way for thee ; but one ; inform
Thyself of it ; pursue it ; one way each
Soul hath by which the infinite in reach
Lieth before him ; seek and ye shall find . . .
. . . O joy, joy, joy to fill
The day with leagues ! Go thy way, all things say,
Thou hast thy way to go, thou hast thy day
To live ; thou hast thy need of thee to make
In the hearts of others ; do thy thing ; yes, slake
The world's great thirst for yet another man !
And be thou sure of this : no other can
Do for thee that appointed thee of God."¹

In some sense also *universality* is a characteristic of every man's task. A fragment of the whole system of Divine Purpose, it is endlessly related to the whole, and to every other life within the whole. And often along those threads of relationship it is possible for the worker to pass out to a vision of the whole. We fancy that the music, throbbing from those instruments of Stradivarius in the hands of a Paganini or other master, has helped to purify and elevate tens of thousands of human souls. A Spanish Jew, grinding his optical lenses in Amsterdam, and reflecting how they bent the rays of light travelling out of the abyss of space, so that by their aid men could grasp something more of the significance of the starry heavens, was led to still

¹ R. W. Dixon : *Love's Consolation*.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

deeper reflections on the Infinite Being or Substance who thus manifested Himself to finite consciousness under the modes of Extension and Thought, and he became at length Spinoza "the God-intoxicated man," rendering back to God the very love wherewith God loves Himself. That was a vocation embracing within the sweep of its vision not only Humanity, but something even of the immensities of the Universe.

So it is in its measure with every vocation truly fulfilled. Every man who thus performs his life-task must be at once saint, philosopher, artist, citizen; for these, it has been said, are the four supreme types of vocation. His partaking of these may only amount to an instinctive reverence towards life, a dim intuition of the system in which he finds his place, a feeling for the beautiful in all work, and a sense of co-operation in the activities of society. But in all these directions he is realizing the note of universality in his vocation, for he is reaching out to grasp the Whole of things. "I alone am the end of the world," says Thomas Traherne. And he adds a quotation from Seneca: "God gave me alone to all the world, and all the world to me alone."

CHAPTER III

The Pyramid of Vocation.

IN what sense, if any, may we assign degrees of value and significance among vocations? Can we discover any luminous principle of classification?

We may at once set aside the attempt to evaluate vocations according to the amounts of their material reward. While there is, no doubt, a rough feeling after justice in the assignment of earthly rewards, nevertheless justice often halts badly in this field. At the one end of the scale the demand for a minimum wage is becoming more and more articulate; and in the case of the highest vocations it is

“ Not on the vulgar mass
Called work must sentence pass,
Things done that took the eye, and had the price.”

Some of the world's great masterpieces have brought little remuneration to their creators; and fame is a lean diet. Indeed, often in the higher ethical and religious spheres the only reward of a vocation has been poverty, opposition, calumny, spite, persecution, a cross.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Ritschl has attempted an outline classification of "the varieties of ethical vocation according to their natural origin." He says "they divide themselves in manifold fashion into vocations which have their origin in the family; vocations which are connected with the production, manipulation, and distribution of the means of physical life; vocations connected with the State and with religion; vocations in the sphere of science and art. Their manifoldness consists in this, that they attain ethical distinctness in part directly, in part, like the latter, only indirectly; that several of them can exist compatibly with each other in the same individual, while others cannot; that some of them are of a public, others of a private nature." That statement at once reveals some of the difficulties that beset all attempts at classification. The division into family vocations, and vocations industrial, political, religious, scientific and artistic is admittedly not free from the charge of overlapping; probably no division can be. Nor is it possible to trace a hierarchy of vocation along the line of this division, for here no single clear principle of classification is at work.

Some of the callings mentioned by Ritschl are of the nature of free vocations. And this does suggest a principle of grading which has some degree of adequacy. For it is in the main true that

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation.*

The Pyramid of Vocation

the greatest earthly vocations are the free vocations, those in which the only compulsion is the compulsion of the inner voice. Of such, for example, are the statesman, the artist, the reformer, the prophet. Yet this principle leaves unplaced the vast mass of the humbler vocations. And in other directions, this attempt to grade vocations according to the degree of freedom enjoyed by each only leads to fresh confusion. Thus one of the greatest of all earthly vocations is that of motherhood. It is not confined to the few: it is one of the most universal. Yet ideally it is a free vocation, an office fulfilled in a community which, though no doubt legally sanctioned, is not constituted on a legal basis. It is a service rendered in a society whose basis is love.

Again there is the phenomenon of double, or even treble, vocation. Fatherhood, which is also a free vocation, is almost invariably combined with some calling which contributes to the well-being of a legally constituted community. Most of the higher vocations, indeed, are of the nature of special tasks super-added to a man's regular calling. In the sphere of industrial labour, one of the free vocations is often combined with a daily round of mechanical duty. Sometimes the mechanic joins the company of the inventors. Robert Burns said, "The poetic genius of my country found me at the plough." Novelist and playwright are occasionally found in the ranks of government officials.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Further, it is often possible to view the same vocation under different aspects, to subject it to differing interpretations. In the industrial world, the producer is sometimes also the retailer. In the world of art, the musician is sometimes almost a pure middleman, an interpreter of the creative output of others, sometimes a composer, sometimes both. The actor may himself be a dramatist. The teacher, the lawyer, the clergyman, the doctor, viewed from the side of the multitude, appear as dispensers of knowledge, justice, grace, health; seen from a higher angle of vision they appear as humble searchers after truth, order, love and holiness.

Where then shall we look for a principle of classification which will give us a criterion of the value and significance of most vocations? If we turn to the two supreme characteristics of every vocation—uniqueness and universality—at first sight they seem to militate against the whole idea of the grading of vocations. For the uniqueness of each vocation means that it is a life-task which God could not do without. If God had not made you for the task, He would have made another, but that other would be you. For it is in the region of the will, of one's choice of purpose in life, we have said, that the essence and core of individuality lies. But if each is indispensable to the whole Divine Plan, it has an irreplaceable value to God. So that in a real sense "all service ranks the same with God."

The Pyramid of Vocation

So it is also at first sight with the universality of vocation. Every life-purpose is endlessly related to every other fragment of purpose within the web of the Divine Plan, and it is related also to the whole Plan. Yet a brief enquiry soon makes it plain that this relation to the whole is, in the case of most vocations, only to be sought for by a long and devious route. Their ethical distinctness is attained only indirectly. It is in the higher vocations that a direct relation to the whole is made *prima facie* manifest, and that in varying degree. For the whole plan of God is not an endless series but a system of purpose. And a system is always a graded series within one supreme principle, which orders and controls the minor elements. Within the system of Divine purpose the lowlier elements can be grouped together under higher governing purposes, and these in turn can be classified and subsumed under still higher reaches of purpose, until at last we arrive at the centre and head of the system, the supreme and governing principle of the plan.

The place of each individual, therefore, within this Divine Scheme depends on the degree of purpose he is called to fulfil. It is in the higher vocations we begin to get glimmerings of the whole Plan within the individual life. "A great man," says Professor Sir Henry Jones, "is the voice of his people and his time." "The more a

Divine Vocation in Human Life

man is the voice of his time and his people, and of what at their best they are striving to be, the greater is he as an individual." "It is the great and good man in whom the whole wide world lives again. In him its purposes gain definiteness and direction, and it is he who has a great individuality. There is accord within and without, between the best man and the best possibilities of his time."¹

Here then emerges one principle according to which we can determine degrees of value among vocations. Yet even here we must be on our guard against expecting a perfect clarity of grading in our bird's-eye view of human vocation. For gradings according to purposes often cross each other. In the factory, the skilled artisan has over him the departmental foreman, the factory manager, the company-director; but in his trade's union he may own allegiance to the leaders of his political party, or be himself a leader.

Not only is this way of classifying vocations confronted with the complexity of the grouping and regrouping of unit callings for different purposes, but it is confronted with the further fact of endless diversity of *kinds* of vocation, preventing us in a measure from assigning them degrees of value relatively to each other. Thus, to name several at random—it is not easy to assign a higher or a lower relative position on the ladder of vocation

¹ *A Faith that Inquires*: pp. 295, 318, 144.

The Pyramid of Vocation

to the scientist, the politician, the explorer, the inventor, the poet ; for the simple reason that they belong for the most part to entirely different classes of vocation. We must if possible find some way of classification according to kind as well as according to degree. We must seek to classify horizontally, so to speak, as well as vertically.

Fortunately there lies ready to our hand a way of classifying according to kinds of vocation. The old division of the soul into the three faculties of sensation, cognition, and volition, or feeling, intellect, and will, has largely been abandoned in modern psychology. Nevertheless we do recognize phases of mental functioning which we may name imagination, thought and action. They are by no means water-tight compartments. The soul functions as a whole in each of them. We name them according to that phase of mental activity which is uppermost—the emotional, the intellectual, or the practical. But we prefer to use instead of “emotion” or “feeling,” the word “imagination”; because “it is the imagination that enjoys; the senses are merely the ducts of the feelings, the imagination is the gulf and the alembic that swallows and transmutes sight and sound, touch and taste, and all emotion and passion into beauty and delight, into power and achievement.”¹

These three categories give us a convenient way

¹ John Davidson in the *Glasgow Herald*.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

of classifying vocations according to kind. Most vocations can be subsumed under one or other of these divisions of the mind—imagination, thought, action. Let us recall again for a moment what are sometimes held to be the four supreme types of vocation—the saint, the artist, the philosopher, the citizen. Of these, sainthood is not confined to the men and women of strictly religious vocation. It may be a special vocation superadded to any of the other vocations at their highest and best. The artist, the philosopher, or the citizen may also be the saint, in this broader view of sainthood. But the artist, the philosopher and the citizen at once suggest the mental divisions we have just indicated. The artist is the man of imagination, the philosopher the man of thought, and the great citizen or statesman is a good type of the man of action. These, however, stand somewhere near the top of their respective ladders of vocation. We must, therefore, in order to get a bird's-eye view of the whole system of vocations into which human life divides and integrates itself, attempt to combine the method of classification according to kind, with the principle of grading according to degree of value.

I

Let us try to build this three-sided pyramid of vocation. Consider first the outstanding degrees of vocation.

The Pyramid of Vocation

(1) The basal layer of this great pyramid of life consists of the mass of humble *units of society*, each with his or her station and its duties, toilers in the home, at the counter or the desk, in field or factory. By them the bulk of the world's work is performed. Without them the higher purposes of earth's great ones would be non-existent. From them often the great ones directly arise.

(2) Those in the next stratum of the pyramid we would name the *nuclear forces of the community*. They are those in positions of authority, who guide, direct and control the work and the welfare of the humbler units. Their work is set for them by the conditions and the needs and the interests of the multitude. It is because of some greater force of mind or character they are called from the ranks to their vocation.

(3) Mounting to a still higher stratum we reach the *pivotal forces of history*,—those whose life-work has wrought great changes in the status of nations. In spite of the criticism which is often levelled at it, Carlyle's doctrine enshrines a great truth: "The history of the world is the history of its great men." For it is in them that mass movements find voice and utterance. And without this, great movements have often spent themselves in a morass of futility.

(4) Climbing higher still, the numbers ever lessening as we ascend, we find the men whom we might call the *torch-bearers of humanity*. They belong,

Divine Vocation in Human Life

not so much to the life of nations and movements within communities, as to universal history. They have taken the leading part in determining the destinies of whole civilizations, and formed turning-points in world-history ; or they have brought some new discovery to the world, which has conveyed a lasting benefit to mankind. "At the head of all that takes place," says Hegel, "therefore of all that belongs to universal history, stand individuals." And Browning has it that

"When old things terminate and new commence,
One solitary great man's worth the world.
God takes the business into His own hands
At such a time."

(5) And above them, as we near the summit, we come upon the *revealers of the Divine*, men wholly appropriated by the Spirit of God to be harbingers from the Unseen. Over them broods with special nearness the Logos of God which crowns the pyramid.

Consider next how this ascending hierarchy of vocation is complicated by the cross-classification into groups, practical, intellectual, imaginative. If we still pursue our figure, these are represented by the three sides of the pyramid. On or towards the one side of the pyramid we place those who spend themselves in the practical callings of life. Along the foot of this side of the pyramid are ranged the manual labourers in field, workshop and

The Pyramid of Vocation

factory. Above them on this face of the pyramid, the nuclear forces of society are the foremen, the managers, the heads of departments ; class, group, or union leaders ; civic administrators. Higher still we come upon the statesmen, military leaders, crusaders—men in the vanguard of neglected but important causes ; patriots, national heroes. These are the pivotal forces of a country's history.

And here we are creeping up into the region of the great vocations, where the voice of God is beginning in some measure to be heard. "In the great causes of God upon earth," says Sir George Adam Smith, "the leaders, however solitary and supreme, are themselves led. There is a rock that is higher than they." It may be only in the pressure of events, however, that the Divine Voice speaks to them. "I have not controlled events," said Abraham Lincoln once, "but frankly admit that events have controlled me." According to Emerson, "The meaning of the world is the secret tie between person and event. Person makes event, and event person."

To this category belong such as Joshua, who established the Jewish slave-rabble from Egypt as an organized people in Palestine ; or Deborah, who rallied her people to the defence of the land against the invader ; or Nehemiah, who led some of the broken remnants back to Palestine ; or the Maccabees, hammers of God, who roused the land to resist the invasion of the alien Greek civilization and

Divine Vocation in Human Life

culture ; St. Joan of Arc, the most popular and most touching figure in history, who, in the hour of her country's shame, "clung to God's skirts and prayed," till her prayers returned to her in form and sound as messages from heaven, sending her forth to show her land the way to freedom. She recognized the Divine voice in her call. "I had far rather rest and spin by my mother's side," she said, "for this is no work of my choosing, but I must go and do it, for my Lord wills it."

On a yet higher level are world-forces like Cyrus the Persian, who overthrew the Babylonian empire, and opened the way for the return of the chosen people, among whom Christ was by and by to appear ; Alexander the Great, who brought the West into contact with the East, levelling the ways for the influx of oriental culture and faith ; Cæsar, who spread the order and organisation of Rome over Europe ; Charles Martel, who rolled back the surging tides of Moslem conquest and saved Western civilisation from hopeless retrogression and ruin ; Napoleon, "the great common man, closer consciously and unconsciously to the 'Immanent Will' than any of his contemporaries, and driving with a single mind against a failing or shaken world-purpose," like a giant besom in the hands of that Will, cleansing the Augean stable of European strumpetocracy. "To my vocation," he said, "I have sacrificed my whole life, my repose, my interest, my happiness."

The Pyramid of Vocation

Hardly yet however have we reached the ranks of the torch-bearers of humanity. The best benefactors of the human race are not always men whose stars burn so fiercely; they shed on the world a serener, more life-giving flame. These are the great reformers, social, moral and religious. The roll includes great statesmen—Pericles, Pitt, Burke, Mazzini, Gladstone; great reformers,—Shaftesbury, who in the name of the mercy of God challenged the pessimism which regards social misery as beyond the reach of human remedy, and championed the cause of the child in the world of labour. Wilberforce also, who laboured for the emancipation of the slave, having heard the call of God in a deep religious experience; and Lincoln, who accomplished the emancipation of the slave for America. The roll includes also great religious reformers, who were interpreters more than revealers of the Divine; St. Paul, who, carrying the Cross to Europe, accomplished far more for that continent than Cæsar or Napoleon; Luther, the solitary monk, who shook Europe from the slumber of a decadent Roman Catholicism. Above them stand the undisputed revealers of God—Moses, the law-giver, who revealed the living God, the great I AM, and so “lighted a lamp for the people of Israel”;¹ Isaiah, the statesman prophet, who, in the year that King Uzziah died, “saw the Lord

¹ Apocalypse of Baruch.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple.”

Thus an endless variety of vocation reveals itself among the men of driving will-power in the world of action and achievement. No doubt all the other powers of mind are at work in every case. Some of those named might almost be classed among the men of intellectual vocation. Though their writings issued from the life of action, yet the Letters of Paul and Luther's translation of the Scriptures have probably done as much, if not more, for the world than their deeds. The general who plans a great campaign belongs also to the ranks of the men of imaginative genius. In the statesman also, in whom we touch perhaps the central type of practical endeavour among vocations, it is often quite clear that all the powers of the mind are at work. In a measure, Marcus Aurelius fulfilled in his person the dream of Plato that the philosopher should be king.

This exercise of all the faculties is not confined to the men of higher vocation. If we take the humblest manual worker, we may find his world of interest divided between his home, his work and his vote. The call of love from the home gives scope for the exercise of his imagination; his work is the outlet for his practical energies; and as an enfranchised citizen, he has opportunity to apply his mind to social and political problems.

The Pyramid of Vocation

It will be noticed also that though we have outlined a graded hierarchy of vocations, it does not always follow that the man in the higher vocation bulks as largely in the eyes of the world as others who follow what we suggest is a lower type of calling. The conqueror, who seeks to make one nation dominant, usually shines with a more vivid light on the page of history than the statesman who seeks to give a great idea concrete embodiment in the life of his people. The clear flame of a Cobden or a Bright may seem but candle-light compared with the fierce bonfire of a Charlemagne. Nevertheless we contend that this is the fallacy of mere quantitative judgment. The true standard of value lies in the quality of work done. The apparently humbler life has often the greater contribution to make to the advancement of the Divine purpose.

II

But let us pass meantime to another of the sides of the pyramid of vocation—to those vocations which may be grouped under the general character of intellectual. At the foot of this ladder we place the vocations which have as their characteristic type the clerk at his desk or the compositor in the printing office. Ascending to a higher level we name as among the nuclear forces of the community the teacher, the cleric, the lawyer, the doctor.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

It is the exercise of the intellect that predominates in these callings, though in all of them heart, mind, spirit and will are blended and interfused in varying proportion. And it is evident that there are degrees of vocational value within this group. Great names stand out in each class, soaring up into the higher reaches of vocation: Arnold of Rugby, John Wesley, Blackstone, Pasteur, Lister, Simpson.

Somewhere between these and the pivotal forces of history stand many of the great prose writers of the world, novelists, historians, essayists. Among the novelists, some rank with the great moralists and preachers of their day; one or two, like Tolstoy, are almost with the prophets; and many set a standard of love, of chivalry and loyalty in life to all classes of society. Of the historians Lord Acton has said that, since "history is the conscience of mankind"; and "ethics are the marrow of history," "the historian must not only compile and chronicle, but elucidate and disentangle by means of moral judgments." And this the greatest historians have done. The essayists have always been the companions and mentors of our finest spirits; they have often filled a great rôle in the society of their day. Rousseau worked out the ideas which moved as a mighty ferment to the upheaval of the French revolution; Voltaire, with his satire and his love of justice, became for fifty years the intellectual

The Pyramid of Vocation

ruler of Europe ; Ruskin brought moral principle to bear alike in the realm of art and of economics.

By and by we reach the men whose discoveries in the realm of inductive reasoning proved turning points in the history of the world's mental life : Copernicus and Galileo, who effected a revolution in man's view of the starry heavens ; Newton, the discoverer of the law of gravitation, Darwin, who formulated the doctrine of evolution, Kelvin, Clerk Maxwell and later workers, who revolutionized our conceptions of matter ; Einstein, who demonstrated spatial relativity.

Above them shine the great torch-bearers of humanity in the world of speculative thought—Kant, who effected a Copernican revolution in philosophical ideas ; Spinoza, with his austere but noble vision of the infinite Reality or Substance ; Plato, of whom Emerson said that “ Plato is philosophy and philosophy is Plato, at once the glory and the shame of mankind.”

If not so great as thinkers, yet consciously nearer in calling to the infinite purpose of God are the men of the prophetic type of intellect. Emerson, the optimist, with his vision of “ representative men ” as servants of the Oversoul ; even Ruskin, who pointed to Nature as the great Instructress of Beauty, which is the emotion of God ; even Morris, who, though learning of Beauty from tradition, yet re-established the religion of Beauty in an age of rampant

Divine Vocation in Human Life

hideousness ; and Carlyle, that “ stir in the very stillness of God, telling us He was still there.”

The third side of the pyramid is the ladder on which are ranged vocations of the imagination. The lowlier toilers here are the men of the mimetic crafts, as distinct from the creative artists. Such are the carvers in stone and wood, the potter, the weaver, in short decorative workers of all kinds. Above them stand the actual designers in these fine arts and crafts. The pivotal forces on this face of the pyramid are the discoverers—explorers who follow the holy grail of adventure in unknown regions : Columbus, who found his way to the vast continents beyond the Atlantic ; Livingstone, who opened up the heart of the dark continent ; and inventors : Caxton, who gave us the printing press ; Watt, who harnessed the power of steam for locomotion ; Marconi, who achieved the miracle of wireless communication. The torch-bearers in this region are the great men of genius in the world of art ; Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the tragic dramatists of Greece, who gave us tragedies of Nemesis and Fate, of the clash of human rights, and of the tears that are for mortal things ; Shakespeare, that mountain peak “out-topping knowledge,” and sparing

“but the cloudy border of his base
To the foiled searching of mortality.”

The Pyramid of Vocation

Wordsworth, who led us back to the heart of Nature through emotions recollected in tranquility; and Keats, already awaking in this life to realities which most men only dream of here; and Browning, who sang of life's probation and man's imperishable worth,—to give only three English names from the world's rich poetic treasure house.

Here too are the painters: Leonardo da Vinci, who captured the mystery of human good and evil in a woman's smile, who saw as none have ever seen the unearthly beauty of the face of Christ; Rembrandt, whose living transcripts of human character seem to thrust themselves forward out of the darkness like the answers to some creative fiat; Turner, who so instructs the eye in the perception of beauty that gazing on the face of nature we can truly say "*his* brush and palette put those lights and shadows and those bright tones there." And the sculptors: Pheidias, who achieved perfection of external form in stone; Michael Angelo;—"if you had faith but as a grain of mustard seed, and gone with it and stood one hour in that unearthly chapel of the Medicis, he would have sent you forth from gazing on his work, with the certainty of glorious immortality covering you like a warm cloak on a winter's day."¹ And Rodin, who made passion live and act in stone,—more like God than men in this, that for him the body is the

¹ Note from one who has visited the chapel.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

symbol of good rather than of evil, a ladder to heaven, not a road to hell. Here, too, stand the great architects, building houses for their God, "exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." Ever men of peace those architects, from the time of David onward, to whom the word of the Lord came saying: "Thou hast shed blood abundantly and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight." Blood-stains are a barrier to the holiest vocations. An age of blood may lay the Temple of the Lord in ruins. But it cannot build it. That is reserved for a peaceful generation.

On this rung of the ladder must also be placed the great musicians: Bach, with his marvellous contrapuntal transcripts of the yearnings of the soul; Wagner, who wrought into profound music the great crises of human life; Beethoven, who recorded in symphony "the melodious memory of his pain"—the pain of one whose deafness shut him out from hearing save in fancy the angelic harmonies.

"But here is the finger of God, a flash of the Will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them, and lo! they are.
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound but a star.

God has a few of us, whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome, 'tis we musicians know."

The Pyramid of Vocation

And here again at the summit, these vocations merge over into the calling of the prophet and the mystic ; in Dante, who sang of his vision :

“ O grace abounding, wherein I presumed to fix my look on the eternal light so long that I consumed my sight thereon !

Within its depths I saw ingathered, bound by love in one volume, the scattered leaves of all the universe ;

Substance and accidents and their relations, as though together fused, after such fashion that what I tell of is one simple flame ;”

in Goethe, who had

“ the harmony within,

The music which hath for its dwelling-place

His own rich soul—the heart that can receive

And hold in its unlimited embrace

All things inanimate, and all that live ;”

in Blake, the poet of innocence, who saw in the red disc of the sun “ an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.”

III

Our pyramid is all but completed in outline. We have found that no hard and fast division can be drawn between either the kinds or the grades of vocation. They merge into each other in every direction, especially towards the heart of the pyramid. And now as we draw near the summit we find the three sides of the pyramid approximate towards each other. The practical, the intellectual, and the imaginative types of life all give rise, at the upper end of the vocational scale, to the prophetic

Divine Vocation in Human Life

calling, in which men become revealers of the Divine. They differ widely, both in the manner and in the degree of their revelation ; for there are as many different types of prophet or revealer as there are differences in human nature and experience. But the one feature common to them all is the consciousness, in varying degrees of clearness, of a summons from God to their task, a sense of Divine compulsion, driving them to utterance.

Prophetism is the most remarkable feature of the life of Israel. It is the proof that Israel was a race chosen and set apart for the task of conveying to the world a special revelation from God. But the call of God for the special service of revelation has not been confined to one nation, though it is true that the great religions of the world have all had their fountainhead in Eastern lands. Israel in ancient days produced its Moses, India its Buddha, China its Confucius, Persia its Zoroaster and later its Bab, Arabia its Mahomet. Close to the summit of the pyramid, where thought, will and imagination are all absorbed in mystic intuition, we must place these great revealers. The light of God has touched these mountain peaks with unreflected ray. God who has ever been seeking communion with man, and who whispers in the heart of the lowliest saint upon his knees, has used these outstanding personalities as His way of reaching men with vast visions of the truth about Himself.

The Pyramid of Vocation

Now no religion has produced so many great mystics as Christianity—men and women like St. Bernard, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, Meister Eckhardt, Boehme, who themselves have become open avenues and traffic ways along which the spiritual world has made intercourse with mankind. Indeed while in other faiths sainthood has been sporadic, in Christianity it is continuous and common. And the rock whose streams of living water they have all drawn from is the cleft rock which follows everywhere on the Christian pilgrimage—Christ. Not the great mystic alone, but many a lowly, nameless saint besides, has in Christ beheld the beatific vision. As in Westminster Abbey the unknown warrior lies among earth's great ones, so in Christ the vocation of these lowly ones is reckoned among the highest, at least by God. These multitudes have dwelt in Christ, because Christ dwelt as no one else has ever dwelt in God. For the Christian, therefore, He is the crown of all Vocation ; the solitary place on the summit of the pyramid is held by Christ. In Him the highest uttered thought of God became incarnate. He is the revealer of the supreme Purpose of God for man.

One fact emerges when we view the pyramid as a whole. The aristocracy of vocation pays no respect to the aristocracy of convention. On the higher steps of the ladder of vocation there appear

Divine Vocation in Human Life

men who have come straight from the ranks of the lowliest and most private lives. God does not imprison men in their first natural calling, with no thought of anything beyond. To fishermen Christ said "Come, and I will make you fishers of men."

Sometimes, it is true, there appear among the great ones of earth those who, like Simon of Cyrene, compelled to carry a Stranger's cross, seem almost to have been pressganged into action by the vision of a great wrong, a rare opportunity, or an impending peril. A Moses, slow of speech, is thrust into leadership that he might free his people from Egyptian bondage. A sensitive-souled poet, Jeremiah, shrinking back as he stands confronting the vision of national doom, is nevertheless reluctantly inveigled into utterance by One who is stronger than he and has prevailed. A Spirit seizes Ezekiel and carries him whither he would not, that he may become a messenger of sorrow to a broken people. But quite often the call finds the inner spirit of the man eager and prepared. One remembers Tell, the woodman, who became the patriot liberator; Cromwell, the farmer-squire, who became the curber of tyrants, Protector of the Commonwealth; Napoleon, the artillery corporal, who became Emperor of France; Lincoln, the attorney, who passed from log cabin to White House; the lens-grinder who was Spinoza, the God-intoxicated philosopher; the cobbler who was

The Pyramid of Vocation

Boehme the mystic; the miner's son who was Martin Luther; the stone-mason's son who was Thomas Carlyle; the butcher's son who was Shakespeare.

The Scripture pages are lusted with such names. A young man is taken from the sheep-cotes and from following the sheep to be crowned ruler over Israel; another, hunting a few stray asses from the paternal farm, is summoned also to the lonely height of kingship, and in the very hour when the new call comes to him, becomes ecstatic so that onlookers cry, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" On Elisha ploughing, on Amos the herdsman of Tekoa, gatherer of figs, the mantle of the prophet fell. A young, sad-hearted butler handing the wine cup in the royal palace of Babylon became Nehemiah, the leader who built again the broken walls of Zion. A Carpenter toiling till thirty at the bench, in an hour of awe and deep humility, made the discovery that He was called to be God's suffering servant to the race of men, and His Divine Son.

Indeed there is, in one sense of the word, no such thing as an aristocracy of vocation :

"All service ranks the same with God ;
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we ; there is no last nor first."

The Kingdom of Divine Vocation manifests a reversal of ordinary earthly values. Its law is one with the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

law of the Kingdom of Heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of vocation is he who makes himself servant of all. And true greatness is measured, not by the extent, but by the quality of the service rendered to mankind. The loftiness of a man's service is proportioned to the disinterestedness of his life and mind.

“Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves.”

It is an illuminating conception of genius, indeed, to say that it results from a purely objective attitude of soul.¹ And it does not necessarily follow that he who stands on a higher rung of the ladder of service renders a greater benefit to the world than he who occupies a lowlier station, though ideally it might be so. A great man's service is often marred by a mingling strain of self. The cup of cold water, given in the right spirit, may be a more perfect deed than the taking of a city. A litre of nard, spilt in pure love on a Wayfarer's feet, not only filled all the house with the odour of the ointment; the fragrance of the deed has filled the world. Here, too, there are last which shall be first. For the Kingdom of earthly vocation is the shadow and type of the Kingdom that is to be.

And there is about the pyramid of Divine vocation the suggestion of infinity. God's purpose

¹ Turck: "The Man of Genius."

The Pyramid of Vocation

is an eternal purpose. We cannot conceive of death, or of the extinction of the world, as putting an end forever to the heavenly plan. And because the plan of God is eternal, each vocation within it partakes of that eternity. Therefore, ere we can see the goal of each earthly service here, we must wait until each mortal shall have put on perfect individuality.

It may be permissible to think also that the nature of one's service here on earth in some sense determines the character of the transfigured service beyond death. We recall the great New Testament figure, which, with no real alteration of meaning, may be applied to the unity of all mankind in holy service, the figure of a building, an unseen heavenly temple. Whence came the suggestion of this figure to St. Peter and to St. Paul? Was it not a thought of the Master Himself? He began life as a builder. Standing in the Temple courts one day near the close of His earthly career, He dared with sublime assurance to say, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will *build* another, an unseen temple not made with hands." And once before He said to a disciple who had just confessed Him Lord, "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will *build* my Church, and the gates of Death shall not prevail against it." What is this house to be? It is a building, as St. Paul has said, that rests on the apostles and prophets as its foundation, with Jesus

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Christ as the chief corner-stone. In Him the whole structure is welded together, and rises into a sacred temple in the Lord. And in Him you yourselves are built into this, to form a habitation for God in the Spirit.

Thus in the life of Jesus of Nazareth we get, as it were in symbol, one grand and satisfying glimpse of the eternal value and destiny of our vocation. He who began life in the lowly earthly vocation of a builder in wood and stone, carries on His vocation in heavenly places, a Builder still. He is the mystic Builder and Soul of the heavenly Temple of Vocation. We are to be built by Him as living stones into His Temple which is the habitation of God Himself, each stone having its function to fulfil, which no other can fulfil, in the great cathedral pile. From Christ's life, from His vocation as the Heavenly Builder, our vocations are to receive their transfiguration, their consummation and apotheosis in the Divine.

SECTION III

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VOCATION

- I FROM MORALITY TO RELIGION
- II WAYS OF THE DIVINE APPROACH
- III RELIGIOUS INTUITION
- IV THE UTMOST FOR THE HIGHEST

CHAPTER I

From Morality to Religion

HITHERTO we have only been seeking to view life under the aspect of vocation, apart (in the main) from the question of man's consciousness of the Divine call. It is this theme which we must now pursue. No doubt in many a humble life this sense of vocation is present as an instinct of faith. But it is towards the summit of the pyramid that this consciousness begins to emerge as a clear intuition. Accordingly it is with earth's great ones we shall chiefly be concerned.

I

How does a man *bear* the Divine call to service? Is the attaining to clear apprehension of the voice of God an achievement of the merely moral consciousness? Is it through some peculiarly intimate vision of the moral ideal that the Divine summons is recognised? Is it thus that morality passes into religion? Or is there something more which belongs to the distinctly religious consciousness? What is the differentiating element which

Divine Vocation in Human Life

separates the religious consciousness from the experience of the noblest pilgrim-seekers of the Moral Ideal? Is the call the result of some gracious revelation whispered from above? Is there some Divine communication, corroboration, reinforcement, leading—name it what you will—in the case of the highest vocations?

Let us recall for a moment the case of the philosopher Kant, not in order to discuss his ethical system, but to remember the man himself as a supreme instance of a sublimely moral consciousness. His reverence for the majesty of the Moral Law, which sweeps with the austerity and clarifying force of a North wind through all his arid pages of ponderous distinctions and schemata and categories, breaks now and then into a rhapsody. One such golden sentence from a dreary page is almost too familiar to need quotation: "Two things fill my mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe—the starry heavens above and the Moral Law within." Realizing that the Moral Law, which has absolute authority for the individual conscience, is a Law whose validity is universal, the same for all rational beings, he finds it awaking within him an emotion which he can only associate with that evoked by the splendour of the midnight sky. But he never—or perhaps we should say barely—got the length of identifying the two emotions. He hardly got so far as the conviction

From Morality to Religion

that it was ultimately the same objective Reality which inspired them.

Such an identification is reached, in the music of immortal words, in Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty":

" Stern daughter of the voice of God . . .

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,

And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."

Here the poet, recognizing that the reign of the Moral Law extends throughout the entire Kingdom of humanity, pierces with soaring insight beyond humanity's frontiers, into the realm of inanimate nature, within which this Kingdom of humanity has emerged. In the poet's intuition this Law is envisaged as the ground-pattern, nay the very tissue and texture, out of which the whole cosmos is woven. The vast laws of gravitation and centrifugal force, by which the solar systems are swung in their places, are themselves but less articulate expressions of the majestic Moral Law.

This is the highest conception of the Universe which can be reached within the stand-point of morality. It goes beyond the assertion "as a biological fact, that the Moral Law is as real and as external to man as the starry vault." For the writer of these words¹ goes on to explain that the Moral Law "has no secure seat in any single man or in any single nation. It is the work of the blood and tears of long generations of men." This explanation

¹ Dr. Chalmers Mitchell: *Evolution and the War.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

seems still to make the Law a human creation, though independent of the individual. But the work of the blood and tears of long generations of men, even though it be the discovery of a fundamental law of the cosmic harmony, is still the work of discovery, not the creation of the Law. It was as men learned to time their stride with the march of the Law, they began to breathe the outer air of the Divine Life which is its true source. Wherever we find this extension of the reign of the Moral Law to the cosmos we are on the borderland of the religious consciousness. "What we call morality," says Mark Rutherford, commenting on a passage in Job, "is no separate science. It is the science by which a decree was made for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder."

In both Kant and Wordsworth, indeed, the religious note was added to the moral consciousness. And it is instructive to observe in each case how. In Wordsworth's case it is a conviction of the imagination quickened by the poet's emotions. Behind the all-pervading Moral Law was an all-pervading presence, disturbing with the joy of animated thought, in short the Divine Being, an utterance of whose Will the Law was. But the philosopher, having reached the utmost limits of the Practical Reason in establishing the validity of the Moral Law for man, projects into the abyss of Being his hypothesis of an Absolute Good Will.

From Morality to Religion

It is just here, however, that the religious problem begins to confront us. In Kant's theory the Law is a bare and empty form backed only by a hypothetical "Absolute Good Will." In its abstract universality it gives no definite moral guidance; and it always remains unrealized—a claim or demand never satisfied by the facts of life. How does such a position work out in practice? In that wonderful autobiographical document, *Sartor Resartus*, we can trace the crisis through which the great modern prophet of the Moral Law passed. We observe how he was reduced to the impotence of scepticism before the bare and distant sky of this empty form. " 'Forward!' I cried: the ground burned under me. No rest, no rest for the sole of my foot. . . . Had but an unseen hand written across the heavens, 'This shalt thou do,' with what gladness, as I often thought, would I have done it, even had it been leaping into the infernal fire!" Carlyle found salvation at last in doing the particular bit of work to which his life at the moment led him; and in hearing the Divine Voice speaking to him in that very task, saying, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might for the love of God."

"But," says Sir Henry Jones,¹ "the doubts which can be cured by plunging into action are shallow. Moreover . . . they are only silenced; and silenced doubts fester." The enquiring soul

¹ *A Faith that Inquires*, p. 9.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

cannot halt there. Indeed the instances just cited suggest that what the complete religious consciousness requires is not a mere hypothesis, nor yet a personal conviction alone, but actual contact with an "Absolute Good Will," disclosing its reality to the soul. It must be more than the cold, distant, and impersonal voice of Duty. It must be the voice of One who bends down and touches us with an intimate touch, who whispers to us in a way that cannot be gainsaid or denied; the voice of an infinite, personal Being, summoning us, and promising while He summons, so transmuting our particular life's task into a Divine vocation.

II

Has human experience any confirmation to make of a Reality answering to this requirement of the mature religious consciousness? Is there such a differentiation in actual fact between ultimate morality and religion? Or are they aspects of the same thing?

The close connection between the two is undeniable. If, as we have maintained, religion in the highest meaning of the term is the response to a Divine call to service, then "religion is essentially a doing, and a doing which is moral."¹ Does religion, then, spring from morality, or does morality spring from religion? Is religion the basis of

¹ F. H. Bradley: *Ethical Studies*.

From Morality to Religion

morality, and morality the expression of religion? Or is morality the soil whence the flower of religion grows? Or are we not in the last resort compelled to say that "as the rose out of the rude mountain, so may issue from the formless nature of the man of earth the many-petalled flower of the restored soul, because behind both is the immanent God?"¹

Shall we say, for example, with Matthew Arnold, that "Religion is morality touched with emotion"? If so, how do we account for this element of emotion? Must we conclude that it is a mere effluvium given off by moral thought and activity, when these are at their highest? That surely is not to interpret religion as the basis of morality, but to make it an achievement or outgrowth of Morality. On this view, religion is just the moral consciousness caught in its moments of exaltation. It is a product of the finite will seeking to realize its own self-born ideal. On such a view, no objective ground is vouchsafed for either morality or religion. Religion is merely morality with the addition of a certain tone-quality of emotion—an exhalation of the moral activity. And the practical problem which we have lately described remains unsolved.

Idealist philosophy sometimes inclines to the view that this emotional element, which is supposed to be the *differentia* of religion, is the result of a rational process by which morality has been demonstrated

¹ A. E. Waite.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

to have its ultimate sanction in the nature of Reality. But no idealist philosophy can offer any mathematical demonstration of this. Idealism is a "Faith that inquires," and however comprehensive the enquiries, they begin in faith and end in faith—faith purged and reinforced, no doubt, but still faith. Nor are the conclusions of idealistic theories always the same. A common type of idealistic theory tends to Pantheism, in which even morality is viewed as contradictory appearance which is transcended in the Absolute. Morality belongs to the sphere of personality; and in human life, it is held, the individual is always seeking to pass beyond himself.

It is only in another type of idealistic theory—that in which the individual is regarded as always endeavouring to attain or become himself—that we reach a view in which the moral life can be said to be externally grounded in Reality. For this view provides the religious emotion with a real, objective source. Yet even here we do not find a final resting-place from the burden of our problem. Religious experience is the heritage of the many, not of the aristocrats of culture only. The mass of mankind do not reach the Object of religious faith by a long and involved reasoning process. The transition from morality to religion must be simpler than this provides.

Do we get any nearer the criterion of religion by saying that the heightened moral experience which

From Morality to Religion

characterizes it is due to our helping out the inner demand of conscience by making a generalization from the observed facts of life, and saying that there is in Nature and History "A power or tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness," and then labelling this quasi-scientific hypothesis "God"? This may seem more within the reach of the average man than the last position mentioned. But does it really satisfy the demand of the religious consciousness to speak of a "stream," or "tendency" observable in things, as "the Eternal"? Matthew Arnold, the author of this definition of God, is pleased to signify his approval of the ancient Hebrew prophets because they viewed God thus. But was it as the result of a literary-scientific culture that the Hebrew prophets reached their conviction of the reality of God? At such a discovery F. H. Bradley cannot refrain from poking satire. "God is 'the Eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness,' just as the habit of washing ourselves is the eternal not ourselves which makes for cleanliness, or 'early to bed, early to rise' is the eternal not ourselves which makes for longevity, and so on. The Eternal is in fact nothing but a piece of literary clap-trap. God," adds Mr. Bradley, "is not an hypostatized copy-book heading."¹

If, therefore, the distinctive thing in the religious consciousness is not a mere feeling-tone generated

¹ *Ethical Studies.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

in the heat of moral activity, if it is not a prayer of faith directed merely towards a hypothesis, nor yet a pathetic prostration before a clever phrase, in what does it consist? Mr. Bradley's own view is that "in the religious consciousness we find the *belief*, however vague and indistinct, in an Object—a not-myself, an Object further which is *real*. The object of personal morality is unreal."¹ For it is just a possible state of perfection of myself, which is not yet realised by me, nor yet in the objective world of the state, nor in humanity. Bradley's position is that this Object not ourselves, in which religion believes, is the Moral Ideal, only clothed now (if we may put it so) with Reality. We believe that the Ideal exists, realized somewhere, somehow in the Universe. In other words the Moral Ideal comes to have the worth of Reality for us.

But in this view also it seems clear that we have not yet escaped from subjectivity. Once more we have to ask, How does this *belief* or conviction arise? Is this value-judgment ultimately justified? Does Reality itself approve of this evaluation of the Ideal? Once again, in this view also, is not religion just a result which emerges in the moral consciousness at its highest moments of self-expression? A noble and convincing attempt² has been made to prove the validity of this value-judgment, or rather to

¹ *Ibid.*

² Prof. W. R. Sorley: *Moral Values and the Idea of God.*

From Morality to Religion

establish the being of God as the ground of all value-judgments. But that is again an arriving at the Object of religion by an elaborate process of reason. And we are concerned here with the religious consciousness which is in such large measure the common possession of mankind. Put Mr. Bradley's position at its best. Grant that this conviction arises in the moment when we completely surrender ourselves to the Good, as that which alone has an eternal authority over our consciences, grant that in so surrendering we conceive—and believe the conception to be true—that this eternally valid Good is the Supreme Power behind and in the real world. It is still just *our* conviction, and apparently reached by ourselves alone, through our own moral struggles and reflections.

Such a conception of religion implies a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of religious experience. "Surely," says Herrmann,¹ "the one implication common to all true religious experience is, that it is *something which is given* to men, not something which they achieve . . . Schleiermacher was right, when he called it 'the consciousness of dependence.' Doubtless it is in the moment of moral activity that this sense of being apprehended by the Omnipotent Goodness comes to a man. But can we call *this* a recognition of oneself as being laid hold of by the Almighty—this mere conviction

¹ Ethik.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

that we cannot fulfil our duty till we venture to lean on such a truth? . . . Thus to confess that we cannot go without crutches is no proof that we have crutches, but merely a proof that we are lame."

The universal testimony of genuine religious experience as to the Source from which it comes is clear. Always, in its intensest moments, the religious soul confesses that this experience is due to a descent of the Divine more than to an ascent of the human: that it is a gift of grace rather than an achievement of moral effort. The ways in which this approach of God manifests itself in human lives will by and by be the subject of our concern. We want at present to emphasise the fact, attested by the universal religious consciousness, that the experience of personal religion, as distinct from morality, owes its origin to God. No church, and indeed none of earth's great religions, has ever had any doubt on this point. That salvation is of the Lord is the conviction of all religious minds.

If, as we have earlier contended, God has been seeking through all creation, through all Nature's physical laws and organic processes, and indeed through the moral activities of mankind and the wider movements of human history, to create individuals, personal life-centres, fit for communion with Him, it stands to reason that He will go on to complete the process by endeavouring to win access to the individual soul, supremely in the great torch-bearers

From Morality to Religion

and revealers of humanity, but also, in measure, in the hearts of all His children, according as they are able to apprehend Him. And it is along the ways of moral activity, in all its forms from repentance up to heroic achievement, that God finds channels of approach. And since God is everywhere choosing men for service and seeking to make His choice known to His children, the highest form of religious experience is just this sense of Divine Vocation. And that, in the noblest cases, involves not merely the call to co-operate with the Divine Will in fulfilling some task within the Divine Plan, but the consciousness, on the part of the individual called, that in the realizing of his life's purpose he can count on the aid of the infinite Life of God, who has graciously stooped down to touch his life, to assure him of an interest which is unfading, a care which is unsleeping, a guidance which does not err, and a help which nothing can defeat.

A special problem arises here and presses for consideration—the problem presented by those nobly moral lives who to the end of the day have remained agnostic, never having reached the clear consciousness of being laid hold of by God. It seems psychologically inexplicable that any of the more strenuous pilgrims of the Moral Ideal should thus fall short of the ultimate goal of their quest. But the fact is there and must be acknowledged. Nor may we in any way discount or belittle the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

greatness of the moral endeavour that has never been baptised into religious experience. If they do not find the wicket gate, they have at least not failed to see the light shining. The lode-star of Duty is not a will-o'-the-wisp; it beckons along the road that leads ultimately to the beatific vision. And few of them doubtless have been absolutely devoid of whispers of the Divine Voice, half-guessed and gone again, straying like lost winds across the dim twilight regions of their minds. Even Thomas Hardy says of the darkling thrush :

“I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope whereof he knew,
And I was unaware.”

Further, we refuse to believe that for them the chance of hearing the Divine call is limited to this life. Short of the complete vision the light, indeed, is in constant danger of being quenched, and where that happens, they may fall from the high path they have chosen to walk, the mind may become sicklied o'er with the pale cast of unclarified thought, and moral disaster ensue. But a consistent following of the light of Duty, which is the lantern swinging in the outer court of the Temple of Eternal Truth, must lead sooner or later, if not here, then beyond death, across the threshold of its doors.

What reply, however, can we make to such as actively deny the reality of the religious conviction

From Morality to Religion

of a felt approach of God? No man can pursue the pathway of the Moral Ideal without having some measure of genuine conviction as to its absolute validity. Every argument such sceptics urge against the reality of religious experience is an argument which is equally destructive of the certainty of their own moral conviction. For in that conviction they also are asserting a reality which is not demonstrable any more than the believer's God is logically demonstrable; and indeed asserting what in the long run is the same reality.

III

When we turn to look for illustrations of this fact of religious experience in vocation, the Bible at once presents itself as pre-eminently the book of the calls of God to men. All the great moments, all the most dramatic episodes in the sacred history, are narratives of Divine calls. Many of them we have already noted. But the truth of this description of the Bible leaps at once to view when we name a few more: Abraham, called from an environment glutted with idol-worship to pass out into the unknown for the sake of the one God; Jacob, loved when Esau was rejected, in spite of his faults held loyal to his spiritual instincts, and thus enabled to hand on the promise made to Abraham; Joseph, called through tribulation to save the race from extinction; among

Divine Vocation in Human Life

the judges of Israel, Gideon, summoned to the rôle of liberator of his people from the Moabite oppressor ; among the prophets, Samuel, called when the word of the Lord was rare—there was no open vision—to imbue his people with the sense of their Divine vocation ; Queen Esther, to whom Mordecai said “ who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this.” The stories of Daniel and Jonah are stories of Divine calls.

In the New Testament, Jesus calls His disciples, some from their nets to be fishers of men, and one, an excise-officer, from his ledgers, to write a diary of the sayings of his Lord ; Philip from his home ties, Nathanael from his prejudices, Paul from his persecuting—to see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man. To Zacchæus, too, the Divine call came to lay aside his ill-gotten gain and follow—and he obeyed ; to the rich young ruler—and he refused ; Cornelius, Luke, Timothy and many another heard the call. There are calls of God addressed to whole churches. And St. Paul has worked out the theology of the Divine calling.

From among these Bible calls, we choose only one, however, for special consideration here, because in it we see most clearly the transition from morality to definite religious experience. Moses is in a real sense the founder of the religion of Israel, the fountainhead of the sense of vocation which runs

From Morality to Religion

through all the story of Israel. He looms up gigantically through the dawn-mists of his people's history. It seems to us there can be no real doubt as to the genuine strand of history behind all the accumulation of later tradition. Moses and his work have left an indelible mark on the race-consciousness of Israel. We can see it in all their literature. The one event which nearly all their writers in moments of emotion hark back to is the Exodus. Sometimes in a sudden first person plural we can see how vivid this race-consciousness was, as these men of a later day identify themselves with the experiences of the beginning :

“Come and see the works of God :
Terrible in His doing toward the children of men.
He turned the sea into dry land ;
They went through the flood on foot :
There did *we* rejoice in Him.”¹

Such cries as these, springing spontaneously out of the national memory, constitute the strongest proof that Israel's release from servitude by the hand of this great deliverer is, apart from details, no myth but fact. Indeed the Law-giver's personality seems to have instilled itself into the very veins of the nation. In no people on earth has the consciousness of a national vocation become so marked. And that consciousness is just the spirit of Moses writ large.

There can be no doubt about the reality of the man, or of his religious quality. Burning clearly

¹ Ps. 66. 5ff.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

through the ancient records, we catch glimpses of the lamp of his spirit, and discern the nature of the flame. His intense patriotism or race-loyalty, his blazing compassion for his people's pitiful serfdom, his resentment at their wrongs, his scorning of all the glories of Pharaoh's court, his repudiation of office and power, recorded in the story of his career preceding the call, proclaim the moral hero. And this record provides us with material enough to lead us to anticipate some such spiritual experience as happened in the desert.

Brooding there in that haunted landscape, where the austerities and sublimities of nature cry aloud concerning the majesty and holiness of God, brooding on his people's wrongs, on their failure to understand him when he had intervened, on his rejection—the grave risk of life he had lately run; wondering if there was a God that answered men's holiest aspirations and undertook for them; or if the vast world was lifeless and mindless, like these great empty steppes of dry and rusty grass; he came suddenly upon a thorn bush that burned in a flame of golden glory. Out of the far-stretching, lifeless breast of the desert had burst this vision of life, intense, surgent, eager, passionate. The God of fire appeared to him radiantly transfigured as the God of life. God is not dead. He is alive! His name is I AM.

Linnæus knelt before the hillside blazing with the gold of gorse-bloom, crying, "Glory, glory!"

From Morality to Religion

Moses took his sandals from his feet and covered his face and cried, "Holy, holy, holy art thou, O living Lord." It was the releasing touch necessary to complete the story of his heart. The material on the altar of his spirit had already been set. It was waiting the fire of sacrifice. Here was the kindling of the flame. The vision of the living God was the Divine response which lit his broodings and his yearnings into the conviction of vocation. When the God within burns upward in longing, only the assurance that this inward voice is no visionary and subjective thing, but one with the all-pervading Life in nature and history, is needed to complete the sense of a Divine call. I AM THAT I AM, or, perhaps, I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE, was the name and nature of the Divine, revealed to Moses in the desert. It was the recognition of the Divine Co-operator at work in nature and in human life that turned the striving and resolving of his heart into the certainty of a Divine Commission.

But soon the sense of his own impotence, his inadequacy for the tremendous task, rushed upon him, and he too had to fight through his temptation in the wilderness. He had to fight against the sense of his own insignificance and lack of influence, against the fear of unbelief and unresponsiveness on the part of his people, against his consciousness of feeble powers of speech, against all the shrinking of self—until the shame of his own conscience

Divine Vocation in Human Life

confronting his new discovery blazed up in him as the anger of God, and he accepted serfdom under the Divine Taskmaster. Dying for others is the extreme form of self-consecration. The patriot sings, "Who dies if England lives?" To become a slave that others may win freedom is but another form of giving life that others may live. "I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters," said the voice of God in the soul of Moses. And Moses submitted to the Divine Taskmaster. "Who is the slave, if my people shall be free." On a later day when he knelt and prayed, "O this people have sinned a great sin; yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin;—but if not, blot me, I pray Thee, from Thy book of life," Moses' consecration was completed.

Out of Moses' consciousness of vocation the race-consciousness of Israel was born, in a sense of predestination to service. Out of this conviction of national predestination to service was born, in the heart of a later prophet, the vision of a remnant of the race to be God's Suffering Servant, through whose tribulation and anguish was to be wrought out spiritual freedom. And in this freedom alone mankind was to achieve its Divine destiny. For this ideal received its final rebaptism in the Servanthood of Jesus of Nazareth, the agony of whose Divine Serfdom wrought spiritual liberty for all the world.

From Morality to Religion

Moses is the supreme example, from the ancient world, of the transition from the moral to the religious consciousness. It is supreme, mainly because of all that flowed from it in the history of the race and of the world ; but it is significant in this also, that the vocation to which he was called was not merely to lead a slave-race out of bondage and to raise them to the moral unity of nationhood, but also to provide them with the nucleus at least of the Moral Law. It was along a moral pathway that God met him ; but it was because he was apprehended of God that he was able to enunciate the rudiments of universal law. And although the Divine awakening came to him along the way of moral heroism, it was at the same time an awakening to the reality of the immanence of God in the world and among mankind. It was the discovery of the priority of the Divine presence to all moral activity.

Gathering up the suggestions of this chapter, we affirm it to be the testimony of all religious experience that it originates in an approach from the Divine. The religious consciousness recognizes that the life of God in the soul of man is prior to the dawn of moral life, even if it is only through the awakening of the moral life that the soul becomes aware of the Divine. The religious consciousness, moreover, transcends morality, for the Moral Law now becomes apprehended as the expression of the Divine Will ; and a man's station and its duties

Divine Vocation in Human Life

as God's particular utterance of His Will to him. In this personal call to be a co-operator with the Divine Will, moral activity ceases to be an infinite progression, in which each success in attaining an ideal goal only leads to the discovery of higher heights of the Ideal still to be achieved. It now becomes the fulfilment of a Divine task, which can be viewed as a whole, a purpose which in a sense one is completely fulfilling in the doing of every detail, a purpose, in the accomplishing of which one no longer struggles in uncertainty and pain and fear, a purpose, the assurance of whose consummation is guaranteed in the ultimate victory of the Cosmic Plan.

CHAPTER II

Ways of the Divine Approach

THIS sense of an infinite personal Life at work in the Universe and in the soul of man, which dawns in the hour of genuine religious experience, is not without analogies, even indeed counterparts, in other spheres of conscious activity. Without an undue straining of language we may call these, ways of God's approach to man. And it may be helpful to pass some of them in review, before turning to consider the nature of the highest ways of God's approach to the soul as truly religious.

I

The result of any adequate philosophical analysis of the relation between knowing and being is to demonstrate the essential *preparedness* of Reality for knowledge. Reality, it is found, must be of the same tissue and texture as the apprehending consciousness. "All knowledge is the kindling of the small light from the great Light which illumines the world."¹ But because such a spiritual interpretation of Reality is the result of a self-reflection on the

¹ Numenius : quoted in Eusebius : *Præparatio Evangelica* XI, xviii, 8.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

process of knowing, where we are mainly concerned with the subject and his efforts to know, the tendency is to find the object of knowledge characterized only by this passive preparedness to be known.

But when one turns from this more or less subjective analysis of knowledge, actively to engage in the strenuous scientific search for the yet unyielded secrets of Nature, and when one comes to report on one's adventures in this region, a more exciting characteristic of Reality emerges. Not only is the real world essentially prepared for knowledge, but it often creates the impression, nay, the assured conviction in the minds of the great scientific discoverers, that it is *eager* to be known. "All human enquiry," says Dr. L. P. Jacks, "assumes that the universe is willing to tell." And he adds, "this is what no bad universe would ever do."

In scientific investigation there is often no apparent logic of discovery. Many great discoveries about the laws of nature have come rather as intuitions, not as the conclusions of a chain of reasoning. And these seem often to be of the nature of *communications* given to the mind rather than daring guesses to which the mind leaps. "It was given to me," said Helmholtz of one of his great discoveries. Poincaré, the French mathematician, describes¹ how the solution of certain mathematical problems suddenly flashed on him in moments when

¹ In *Science and Method* (English translation, published by Nelson).

Ways of the Divine Approach

he had laid aside his task of strenuous research—once under the stimulus of black coffee, once when entering a carriage, and once again when idly crossing the barracks street during his military service.

It is not suggested that there is anything supernatural or magical about these happenings. The protracted period of conscious effort has doubtless played its part, in exploring the difficulties, eliminating false clues, erecting barriers across *cul-de-sacs* of mental activity. Then the subconscious mind takes up the pursuit through the still opened doors, and down pathways filled with hope and promise. It is not the prerogative of every mind to make these discoveries. A large part of the preparation for them lies in the peculiar build of the mind which applies itself to such problems. Mathematical genius lies in the more than normal capacity for “the peculiar intellectual emotion which is satisfied by the contemplation of mathematical system.” But this must surely be added. Mathematical system corresponds to some aspect of Truth and Reality. And Reality is in the last resort spiritual. So that, in such revelations, Reality may without exaggeration be said to co-operate with the effort of the apprehending mind. It, as it were, whispers its secret to the mind emotionally and intellectually prepared to respond.

It would seem, indeed, as if the human mind were a receiving instrument imperfectly attuned

Divine Vocation in Human Life

to appropriate the messages which Nature appears eager to convey to it. The strenuous preparatory enquiry is, let us say, the tuning process. And when the perfect note of apprehension is struck at last, it is struck by the environing Reality rather than by the mind itself. For when we speak of Nature as "*eager*" we have, almost by compulsion, used a word of personal, spiritual implication. Need we hesitate to say that we are actually dealing with spiritual factors here ?

The brilliant scientific discoverer is the gifted child of Nature stirring towards waking, and now and then, in moments of waking, grasping the gifts which mother Nature offers with sollicitation. It is because of some spiritual tie between them that the inter-communication takes place. A restless child will often stimulate its mother into waking when the noise of the storm has failed ; and this is because of the closer spiritual bond between mother and child. It was once reported of a naval officer that he could be wakened by one word only ; but by that one word however lightly whispered—the word "signal." The point to notice here is that without the intervention of that other person, awake and whispering, the man would not have responded though a whole navy were flashing its mechanical signals to him. May it not, by analogy, be suggested that the moment of awareness in the scientist, when he leaps to a discovery, is the point of elevation in his

Ways of the Divine Approach

mind where nature breaks to disclose itself the home of infinite Personality? To give a poet's¹ analogy, what the mole or the bat is to Nature we are to the Divine mind. To make the analogy more precise and homely, what the dog is to its master, man, we are to the infinite Mind that signals to us in and through Nature. The intelligent dog responds to signs and even words with a certain degree of accuracy. But the full mind of the dog's deity, man, is a wide world of unexplored possibility to the dog's still dormant apprehension. So we guess at the outskirts of the secrets which are eagerly offered to us in Nature from the unsearchable riches of the mind of God.

The discovery of electricity, for example, was not the inventing of a new force. It was only the apprehending and harnessing by scientific skill, of something which has always pervaded the universe, nay, something which now seems to be the fundamental factor in the constitution of the material world, and which has always been *inviting* the mind of man. When the human mind at length opened to something of the significance of this power, a vast new world of possibility was placed within man's grasp. And to-day we have the miracle of wireless communication, whereby the voice uttered thousands of miles away can be brought within the range of hearing, and the livingness of the Universe demonstrated in the most amazing way.

¹ Walter De la Mare.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

Indeed in the world of science to-day it would seem as if "many other secrets of the Universe are at this moment knocking at the door of the mind and waiting to be let in," while in all probability to an omniscient Mind we may seem very unreceptive, with "so much truth standing near us being beaten back from our closed minds and wills."

The scientist's task might almost, in the literal sense of the word, be called a "vocation"—a calling of God through Nature to listen. And as he puts forth all his faculties to the task—as he observes, contrasts, compares, differentiates, combines, classifies, infers, generalizes—his mind is gradually *e-duc*-ated, led out and drawn up to a higher level of receptiveness, where at length, in a moment of tranquillity in which effort may have ceased, some fresh secret of Nature finds an avenue of consciousness into which it breaks and along which it breathes its meaning. Just as the meteors, wandering beyond the earth's atmosphere, only become objects to the eye when they become incandescent by impinging upon that atmosphere, so the hidden forces and laws of Nature only become mentally incandescent when they break into our consciousness, as it were, and pass across some outreaching fringe of it.

"The natural world," says Professor Royce, "has somehow created in man a being who is apt for the task of interpreting nature. . . . If then you

Ways of the Divine Approach

seek for a sign that the Universe contains its own Interpreter, let the very existence of the sciences, let the existence of the happy inventive power which has made their progress possible, furnish you a sign . . . that the Universe is endlessly engaged upon the spiritual task of interpreting its own life."

II

A similar experience is found in the activities of the æsthetic consciousness. We are not thinking of such a phenomenon as Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* writing itself on the poet's brain in a dream. In a sense all artistic work partakes of the feature to which we are here referring. Art is not mere representation; in the ultimate sense it is not creation; it is revelation. Strictly speaking representation is mere photography, in which all those non-essential details appear which blurr the artistic unity and significance of the picture. And although it is in measure true that art is creation, the bringing to birth of some new and unique thing, it is nevertheless working upon data, and with materials, given to it in the world which environs the artist. In the absolute sense, only the Divine Artist is a creator. Art, like science, is interpretation, the bringing to clear light of Nature's more or less hidden resources of beauty.

The beauties, sublimities, teleologies of Nature are, according to Kant "not matters of fact

Divine Vocation in Human Life

(phenomena) so much as favours of Nature in which the Unknown Matter disports itself before our eyes." "The sculptor tells us that the statue is found lying in the marble. The glass-maker reports that the metal is alive in his hands, simply coaxing him to make something beautiful. The iron-forging, it is said, is useless until he acquires the feeling of the iron. These things," says Prof. Bosanquet, "are more than rhetoric. The matter—the physical medium of art—is one half its inspiration. Teleology does not come out of the empty mind; it is the focussing of external things together, until they reveal their internal life."¹

It would seem, so far as concerns the Beautiful at least, as if God did not wish to have any secrets. "He has no more secrets," says Clutton Brock, "than a piece of music in which can be heard the vast omnipotent yearning of the love of God." Yet God does not give that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast His pearls before swine. Only the seeker who goes on asking, seeking, knocking, wins rewards from God's treasure-house. And only the highest seekers in the realm of art reach the holy place where God's choicest secrets are unveiled. God speaks His confidences always to those who have ears to hear. The beauty mediated by the painter or the musician is simply *his* response to the universe

¹ Bosanquet: *Individuality and Value*, vol. i, p. 165f; cf. also Morris: *Lectures on Art*, p. 195. Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 455.

Ways of the Divine Approach

which has sought a listener in him. "The poet," says Eucken, "brings the otherwise dumb things to speech."

But let us listen here also to the artist's own confessions about his experience. "When I am feeling well," writes Mozart, "my thoughts come in swarms and with marvellous ease. Whence and how do they come? I do not know. I have no share in it."¹ Alfred de Musset, the French poet, says, "It is not work, it is listening. It is as if some unknown person were speaking in your ear." George Eliot declared that "in all she considered her best writing there was a 'not-herself' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting."²

But here, too, the question arises: Does this prompting come from some deeper spring in the artist's own personality, or is it a voice that whispers to him out of the external environment to which he is reacting? No doubt a true psychological account of the experience does need to make room for the place which the personality of the artist plays in it. Sully Prudhon says, "In writing these dramas I seemed to be a spectator at the play; I gazed at what was passing on the scene, in an eager, passionate expectation of what was to follow. And yet I felt that I was the author of all that was

¹ *Mozart*, by Jahn.

² *Cross's Life of George Eliot*.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

enacted, and that it came from the depths of my being." Such a view contains no doubt a large part of the truth. "The poet sinks a shaft, as it were, into the very depths of the inner life; penetrates its secret treasures and returns Prometheus-like with a gift of fire and of light to men. The venturesome words that record such a moment of penetration and insight never lose their power: they seem to have caught something of the everlasting freshness of the world of which they speak; and one man after another may find in them, at some time of need, or gladness, or awaking, the utterance of thoughts which else he might have been too shy or too fainthearted to acknowledge even to himself."¹ The immanent God can speak to the poet in the depths of his own personality.

Yet the poet's or the artist's message is as a general rule more than a gift drawn from the depths of his own being. Deep calleth unto deep, a voice from the environing world awakening, oftentimes, the voice from the depths of his own life. "Go to," says William Watson,

"I also would the skein unravel,
Art is not Nature warped to man's control,
But Nature's reminiscences of travel
Across an artist's soul."

In some sense the universe is operative in the process,—the infinite spiritual Reality which lies

¹ Dr. Paget.

Ways of the Divine Approach

behind all the manifestations of the natural world. Poet, aesthetic critic and philosopher alike bear testimony to this. The experience of the aesthetic consciousness is kin with the scientist's experience in discovery. "The life beyond calls us through different doors, but it is the same life that calls."¹ And the poet's vision is the result of the meeting of his own illumined personality with the Divine Presence that lives in Nature and disturbs him "with the joy of animated thought." "A lizard's eye, a drowsy bee, a gold-finch—what are these curious and lovely things which we blaspheme with the name of phenomena, but mysterious meeting-places, greetings between ourselves and the All."²

"Aesthetic emotions," says Earl Balfour, "have something of a prophetic character. They cannot be put into propositions or tabulated. But mankind have always felt that they opened to us at their best something conveying not knowledge but an intuition that was greater than knowledge."³ In the same place he has argued that "in our emotions as we contemplate a work of Art, there is inevitably the ever-present sense of the artist in the background, between whom and the contemplator there is a spiritual communication. But," he continues, "we would be doing wrong to refuse the name of

¹ John Masfield : Graduation Address at Aberdeen.

² Clutton Brock on Ralph Hodgson's Poems.

³ First series of Gifford Lectures, chap. III.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

aesthetic emotions to feelings of natural beauty. The greatest works of art sink into relative emotional insignificance when compared with Nature at her best. . . . How, then, is the beauty of Nature to be treated? Art involves an artist, and communication between spirit and spirit. Are we then to have two principles of Aesthetics, one for Art and one for Nature? Must we not apply the same principle to what is greater than Art—the glories and splendours of the material world? ” And if it is so of the feelings after the Beauty of the world, which are the common possession of mankind, how much more vivid and clear must be the communication of spirit with Spirit in the case of the greatest of the artists and poets. As Francis Thompson says, “the poet discerns through the Lamp Beauty the Light God.”

Thus in the experiences of the aesthetic consciousness at its highest, we are not debarred from the inference that the harmonies, symmetries, adaptations of colour, form, sound, and the inner concords of human relationships as well, kindle the poetic soul to an enthusiasm, awaken in him a thrill of emotion, as he recognizes with greater or less clearness, that something personal, intimate, anxious to be friendly, is making an appeal to him through nature and life. Art is revelation, for Beauty is a manifestation of the emotions of God. He beckons to men through the beauty of the

Ways of the Divine Approach

world, just as if, through fair eyes, a soul looked out dumbly, wistfully, into theirs seeking a response. It is "God writing upon the veil which hides His face."

III

In the world of moral action, even in the region of social and political reform, a similar experience has sometimes been felt. Often in a great life of service, as the reformer wins freedom in pursuing some end of justice, he comes to a moment in which he realizes that the world in which he has thus sought to express his own best self is fundamentally a Reality which is *hospitable* to the ends and purposes which he has pursued. In a measure this is already a discovery of spiritual significance in the attitude of the envioning world to his endeavours. It may deepen into a clearer insight still. Occasionally the reformer becomes convinced he has discovered that the very Ideal which he sought to realize is also patiently endeavouring to find expression for itself not merely through *his* efforts, but through the whole trend of human history also. And in some cases, he leaps to the assured conclusion that what he has thus encountered is a personal Divine Will pursuing a supreme purpose in the world.

But it is in the sphere of religious activity, and in moments and persons of outstanding spiritual exaltation, that this sense of Cosmic Personality

Divine Vocation in Human Life

becomes so direct and definite as to cease to be a mere emotion or obscure presage, and to become an experience with articulate rational content. But just as there are degrees in the kingdom of vocation, so there are degrees in the consciousness of vocation. And it is the great luminaries of religion, the Revealers, who have heard the Divine voice with an authenticity, a clearness and fulness, against which there can be no cavil or gainsaying:

We do not wish to suggest that this consciousness, this conviction, cannot be the possession of the average religious experience of mankind. "God," says Clutton Brock,¹ "is not far away in His heaven telling us by message through His favourites what we are to do. He is actually present always in all righteousness, in all truth and in all beauty, and we must be aware of them, if we are to be aware of Him. He has no favourites. He does not reveal Himself at one moment and hide Himself at another. He is present always for all men to be aware of." God's desire is to reveal Himself to all men. And He earnestly seeks for that sensitiveness of apprehension, and that faithfulness in trust, through which He can truly make Himself known.

But one of the surest methods of Divine self-communication is the making use of earth's gifted ones as intermediaries. And just as it is the function of the scientist and the artist to mediate the secrets

¹ *Studies in Christianity.*

Ways of the Divine Approach

of nature and life for the service and enjoyment of the common man, so it is the vocation of the great revealers to mediate the ultimate secrets of the Divine Purpose, so that the lives of the lowly may be transformed, by an awakening to the consciousness of their Divine Vocation. It is *their* calling to transmute, with the alchemy of the Divine Light which has been bequeathed to them, the gross body of flesh and blood which constitutes the ordinary aspect of things seen and temporal, until it becomes translucent and the Soul of the Divine shows through. "The great religions of the world are the stimulants by which the power at the root of things has worked upon the sluggish instrument of human destiny."³

³ Mrs. Humphry Ward: *Robert Elsmere*.

CHAPTER III

Religious Intuition

WE turn next to give some attention to the highest avenues of the human mind along which the Divine approach is made.

If God finds man along the ways of man's moral activity, then religious experience is at once a discovery and a revelation. "No man ever found God except when God was seeking to be found. Discovery is the under side of the process; the upper side is revelation."¹ Most of what we can ascertain as to the method of the Divine approach in religious experience—the upper side of the process—is conveyed to us in the musings of convert or mystic. In halting, stammering speech they have sometimes tried to tell us how God found them. The prophet too, when he thunders forth his "Thus saith the Lord," conveys to us the mysterious assurance that God has spoken in his soul.

But of the under side of the process—the preparation of the human soul for the Divine approach—we do have clearer accounts. And a brief enquiry, mainly into the inner nature of this human side of

¹ Fosdick: *Christianity and Progress*.

Religious Intuition

the process, must now be undertaken. It is no elaborate discussion of the stages of the mystic way we here set before ourselves. That has been done sufficiently often. We only propose to give a brief description of some aspects of this question, chiefly to emphasize the naturalness and the reasonableness of all religious intuition, and to suggest one or two corrections of false impressions. In doing so we are not wholly neglecting the upper side of the process. God is as much at work in all man's out-reachings to make contact with the Real World as He is in the communications which come to us through that environing World, be it through Nature or Spirit.

I

Bergson has emphasized the fact that the urge of life, which is at work throughout the entire process of creative evolution, has bifurcated in the life of animal organisms. In the one direction it has manifested itself in instinct, that thin streak of mental light which leads its possessor so unerringly to its mark, which teaches the swallow to build, or to find its way back to last year's nest across the seas, which drives the squirrel to store its winter food, which leads the eel to turn shorewards from the deep seas where it was born, and to find its way far inland by tortuous stream and meadow.

The origin of instinct in bird or beast is still in large measure a mystery. It may be the result of

Divine Vocation in Human Life

the transmission of habits slowly and painfully acquired through countless generations. It may be that there is a great world-memory passed on from generation to generation, and that we can get psychically into touch with "knowledge running backward to the beginning of the world." W. B. Yeats has recently recalled this theory, and on the basis of it would explain instinct. "It is the dream-martins that all unknowingly are master-masons to the living martins." But whatever be the explanation, one thing can be said about instinct with some confidence, that, however spontaneous be the method of the reactions which living things make to the promptings of environment, these reactions could not have taken place except in response to the promptings of external stimuli. Always instinct is a reaction to something objectively given in the world that surrounds the living creature.

But let us turn for a moment to the other side of this bifurcation of the vital urge, to which Bergson has drawn attention. Over against instinct stands the way of reason or intelligence. It is supremely in man that this side of the process finds illustration. Here by the collecting and arranging of facts and drawing inferences therefrom; or by deducing conclusions from premises—in both of which processes intellect is often faulty and has to proceed by the way of trial and error—man reaches out towards the goal of his activities. Wider in its

Religious Intuition

scope than instinct, intellect is less accurate in its results. But it may also be pointed out that intellect dawns concomitantly with the rise of will in man. It is part of the whole process in which man acquires the capacity of setting before himself a goal for his strivings, of creating an ideal environment for the soul. But why on that account should it be thought that the intellectual process is something entirely disparate and dissociated from the streak of mental light manifested in instinct? Is it impossible that the two streams should meet and coalesce once again? May it not be that the flowing stream of the urge of life is a single undivided stream? May it not be that in man, more advanced than the creatures of pure instinct, a point has been reached where an expanding of the stream has taken place, into the lake of reason?

And since we can see within these intellectual activities, higher forms of instinct, spiritual senses, intuitions forming, since further we recognize that the greatest among mankind are those in whom the noblest intuitions have formed, may it not be that, in the development which still lies ahead of mankind, the stream of life is offering to gather itself together again out of the lake of reason into a new reach of the river channel, spiritual intuition, in which all the wealth of the rational experience is conserved and included in a richer harmony?

Certainly intuition seems like instinct in this,

Divine Vocation in Human Life

that it is a response to real objective spiritual stimuli ; it is a piercing beyond the ideal environment which the soul as rational and volitional has created for itself, to make contact with the Spiritual Reality which is the ultimate source and sanction of the Ideal. "Deep down in the heart of each of us there is the feeling that beyond our best there is still a better ; that beyond all ends of action, beyond the whole hierarchy of ends and motives, there is a supreme End which we can discover only by trying to realize it, while it is yet undiscovered ; that beyond all visible authority there is an invisible Authority which has the first and last call on our allegiance ; that beyond the various communities, narrow and wide, which claim our devotion, there is a larger community of the Kingdom of Man, widening out into the Kingdom of God, which when it claims our devotion takes precedence of all others."¹

II

Religious intuition is something that belongs naturally to the human soul. It is usually present in childhood, obscured in adolescence, to re-emerge when conversion takes place. It reaches its highest expression in the prophet and the mystic. Penitence is the true gateway of vision. "Only penitence can see 'with open face' the one vision that can subdue and satisfy a world—the vision of a Man on a Cross."²

¹ Edmund Holmes : *The Nemesis of Docility*.

² Mrs. Herman : *Meaning and Value of Mysticism*.

Religious Intuition

Yet the experience of conversion is rather the first stage of the mystic experience. From this primary illumination the mystic passes on through the stages of purgation and obedience, contemplation and 'the dark night of the soul', to the experience of the *unio mystica*. The prophet rises up, through the heightening—gradual or sudden—of conscience, to his apprehension of the Divine. It is with the consciousness of mystic and prophet—the two highest types of religious intuition—we are here mainly to be concerned.

Three main qualities characterize the man of outstanding religious intuition. He is dowered with imagination; he is possessed of a high degree of moral sensitiveness; and he is gifted with a power of rational insight. For all sides of his being—emotion, will, and intellect—are involved in the apprehension of his vision.

At all levels of mental activity there is a tendency to develop intuitive functionings. Even at the perceptive level these are formed. Imagination, indeed, may be claimed as one of these higher senses—so to name them—belonging in part to the perceptive side of the mind, whether it takes the form of the artistic sense, with its immediate feeling for correct combinations of colour and form and sound, or the literary sense, with its feeling for the inevitable word.

This aesthetic sense may possibly originate in the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

assault of the ordinary senses by such a rush of sensations that they can no longer be apprehended in their separateness; and they somehow coalesce into this higher apprehension of the unity that pervades all beauty. And there takes place, at the same time, a leaping forth of the mind through this higher sense, to identify itself with the objective Reality of which Beauty is a manifestation. A high degree of imagination is no doubt part of the equipment of all minds gifted with a distinctive religious intuition—the power, that is, of apprehending the Divine through the quickening of perception and emotion in the presence of all beauty and sublimity.

I would like to quote here an incident from my own experience, which illustrates the sharpening of intuitive powers in the region of ordinary perception. The subject of the incident was a simple fisherman, innocent of books save one, and largely ignorant of the ways of the world. He was suffering persecution from his fellow-craftsmen at the time of the incident. And in the Scottish Highlands the cause of bitter differences is nearly always one and the same—religion. The man was forced for a time to pursue his calling alone, sailing in his solitary boat to the fishing grounds, laying his lines, and returning with his catch single-handed. The courage of it was the most moving thing in the village.

Religious Intuition

Anxious to know how it was done, a friend and I met him by arrangement on the pier, in the small hours of a dark morning, when the ebb-tide was setting in, and we put out to sea together. As the pallor of the dawn began to come up in the East this silent seaman loomed before us like a noble giant. In silence he shot his lines, lashing the tiller to the sides of the tiny craft, and reaped his little harvest of the sea. The wind fell. There was a profound calm. And when the first streaks of the dawn-light began to tint the skies, he broke the silence. What followed was an extraordinary revelation—this simple soul reading as from an open book the secrets of the sea. In two minutes the mist would form on the brow of yon cliff, he said, and then drop down on the ocean breast. And, as we watched, the clear sky blurred at the point, and the magic curtain fell as if conjured from the heart of nature at his call. One minute more and the dawn breeze would come creeping in from yon other "airt" as he called it. And in a few seconds, far away, the still, white, softly heaving surface dusked; and in a few seconds more, the breeze stole on us with a whisper as if at his command. On and on he went, forestalling mystery after mystery of the dawning day, until an awe fell on our spirits, and the old man was transfigured before us. "You are a mystic," one of us said. But he only gave vent to an uncomprehending chuckle.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

What we had witnessed was the result of a long life of patient obedience to the will of nature, and of communing with the very spirit of nature. It was the result of eyes grown bright, and a mind grown wise, with watching. By faithfulness to his vocation it was given to him to discern mysteries which were a sealed book to others. But the scales fell from our eyes for a moment and we had a glimpse of the eternal significance of this simple soul *en rapport* with Nature, and indeed with Nature's God. For the analogy holds: it is through the long discipline of the mystic, through constant obedience to his holy vocation, through constant observance of the laws and ways of the Spiritual World, that his inner eye grows sensitive to the light from beyond the stars.

The perceptive sphere of the mind is not the only one in which imagination plays a part. It informs most of the other higher senses which the mind seems to create. Sympathy, for example, is one of the moral senses, even if emotion plays a main part in it. It is the fusing into a unity, in the mind of the sympathizer, of all the feelings of grief or pain or pleasure which belong to another, and a rushing out of the soul in self-identification with that other. In the man of religious intuition, sympathy takes the form of self-identification with the emotions and sufferings of God. In this, his mind is not divorced from sympathy with his fellowmen. Rather he

Religious Intuition

has that sympathy in its most exalted form. For the joys and sorrows of God are a reflection of the joys and sorrows of humanity. It is the prophet or the mystic who sees how it is true of God's relations with men, that "in all their afflictions He was afflicted," that "He bare them and carried them all the days of old."

Specialized forms of moral intuition, found also at the ordinary levels of life, are insight into character, social tact, and political sagacity. Insight into character, instinctive in many sensitive spirits, is often strikingly exemplified in men of religious intuition. It is the pure in heart who can best read souls, and it is the pure in heart who see God. Social tact—that feeling for the right word or right action in many a perplexing human relationship—may not always be characteristic of the man of religious intuition. Nevertheless the saint has often acquired a delicacy which knows instinctively how to avoid hurting or offending others. Political sagacity, that alertness to trends and movements in public life and public opinion, may belong even less frequently to the man of spiritual insight. Yet we must not forget that the prophet is one type of the man of religious intuition, and in him this power often appears quickened and enhanced to an extraordinary degree. Conscience, too, and a sense of honour are forms of moral intuition, and they are strongly developed in prophet and mystic. In

Divine Vocation in Human Life

short, a sensitive and highly developed moral sense is part of the equipment of the man of outstanding religious intuition. The way of obedience is a main part of his discipline in insight. It is he who does the will who learns of the doctrine.

Glance for a moment at some of those higher senses which are formed in the sphere of the more purely intellectual activity. There is, for example, the much talked-of commonsense, the one sure fact about which, the cynic tells us, is that it is not common. Most men have a certain amount of it, but only in the few, perhaps, does it reach the level of an intuition. It consists of a special sensitiveness to the great social conventions whose worth and validity have been tested in the crucible of life, a feeling, an instinct for the roads along which the main business of life is transacted. It is the capacity for sound judgment which he acquires who stores to good purpose the best of life's experience.

But commonsense is really a name for a group of interrelated special senses which co-operate to produce sound judgments. We talk, for example, of a sense of proportion and perspective in life, and of a sense of values. And kin with these and even an indispensable concomitant of them is the sense of humour, which has a great contribution to make to sanity of outlook upon life. We venture to suggest that there is a spiritual commonsense which belongs to religious intuition, a sensitiveness to the

Religious Intuition

laws of the Unseen World, the great Divine conventions, an ability to see life steadily and see it whole, combined sometimes with a sense of humour,—qualities which Jesus so richly possessed.

But the special instincts belonging to the intellectual sphere, which bring us close up to the region of mystical apprehension, are what used to be called “the illative sense”—“that by which the mind draws remote inferences without a conscious syllogistic process”—and the “intuition of totality.” In the exercise of these faculties lies the essential nature of genius. Genius is that type of the human consciousness that has become so much *en rapport* with the universe that it leaps up with an answering gladness to the play of the World-soul upon it, and allows itself to be used for some part of Its self-disclosure. “It is no personal gift or power,” says Turck¹; “it is rather the highest attitude of the human mind towards the Universe. Its distinguishing mark is perfect disinterestedness or objectivity. In the sense-world it is not a seeking of animal desire but the pure pleasure of aesthetic perception. In the thought-world it is the subordination of all striving and prejudice to the search after absolute truth. In the world of action it is the selfless pursuit of an end, belittled neither by vanity nor greed. It is the exact antithesis of the super-egoism of the modern overman. . . . Genius

¹ *The Man of Genius.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

in this definition is the greatest form of love. It meets the beauty of the visible world with the joy of a young lover ; it thinks with a reverence which sees all things *sub specie aeternitatis*. It acts in the spirit of Thomas à Kempis when he said that ' where a man seeketh himself he falleth from love.' ”

III

Religious intuition then is not any isolated phenomenon in human nature. It is part of that regular tendency of the mind to form higher senses, intuitive faculties, in every direction. Many of these, indeed, are foregleams and antitypes of religious intuition. Nor is religious intuition confined wholly to the few outstanding spiritual geniuses who are called mystics and prophets. These differ from the average religious consciousness, not in kind but in degree. Indeed a rudimentary instinct for the mystic vision exists in multitudes. Most men, gifted with even a small amount of imagination, have some time or other stood on what the mystics call " the threshold," the gateway which Nature seems to provide into the world of Spirit. " The mysterious primordial vitality of trees and woods, instinct with energy, yet standing as it were on the borderland of dream, appears, we know not why," says Evelyn Underhill, " to be peculiarly adapted to this awakening. The silent magic of the forest, the strange and steady cycle of its life, possesses in a peculiar degree the power of unleashing the

Religious Intuition

human soul ; it is curiously friendly to its cravings, ministers to its inarticulate needs. Unsullied by the corroding touch of consciousness, that life can make a contact with ' the great life of the All,' and through its mighty rhythms man can receive a message concerning the true and timeless world of all that is and was and evermore shall be."

The lover of Nature has sometimes felt a sense of *forever-and-ever-ness* in her presence—all things fresh and young, and yet always inconceivably old and dignified ; hills brooding and thinking like great old men, wind saying " there never was a yesterday and there never will be a to-morrow " ; as though time had ceased, had never begun, as though spiritually he had passed out beyond the sphere of change, and were seeing all things in one eternal Now.

The lover of Nature has felt also at times the *aliveness* of the world. He has had the tingling and exciting sense that every lonely place has a soul. The trees seem watching him ; the eyes of the flowers seem watching, peeping and wondering, then turning and exchanging glances with each other, and nodding their silent mutual understandings. Nothing is dead. Everything is part of some great Single Life that sees everything, and is forever trying to become the intimate friend of his soul.

The lover of Nature can further recall " that elfin and adventurous time " of childhood when

Divine Vocation in Human Life

“tall grass closed over him like woods.” And even in later life he has often the sense of *at home-ness*, of belonging somehow to that inner life which Nature gives glimpses of possessing. Isaiah knew the feeling. When he says, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain,” he is looking forward to the day when this childhood experience shall be really true for all men and for all creation—all nature friendly, familiar, full of trustfulness, void of fear. And his reason is the mystical one: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,”—haunted with the Divine Presence.

Mysticism, or rather the capacity for mystical vision, is therefore not a type of religious consciousness that is *sui generis*. It is simply the highest manifestation of religious consciousness. It has, we repeat, its analogy in the general tendency of the human mind to develop what we have called higher senses. And since these are not really separate faculties or organs of intuition, each being but a particular poise or balance of mental powers, so mystical apprehension is not so much a special sense given to the favoured few. It is just the ordinary powers of the mind which are found in all men wrought into a special harmony and correlation, and raised to such a pitch and tension that they function together at this new level of apprehension. “It is in reality,” says Mrs. Herman,¹ “nothing

¹ *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism.*

Religious Intuition

else than the intellectual, volitional and emotional powers turned upon their source and goal." Feeling, thought and will, she says again, are "the organs by which man is *intended* to make contact with God. . . . Man's heart cries for a home in the heart of God, man's mind aches for the light of the Eternal Reason, man's will gropes for anchorage in the Divine Will." And again, "it is reason, will, and emotion alienated from their preoccupation with the ephemeral, and naturalized to their high original uses."

It is with the experience of these great spiritual path-finders, faith's epoch-makers, we are now concerned. How have men described this sensitiveness of the soul's inner retina to the light from beyond the stars?

Edward Caird has defined mysticism as "religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form: it is that attitude of mind in which all other relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul to God." And Rufus Jones calls it "that type of religion which puts emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on the direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most intense, acute and living stage."

One main form which this experience takes, stands in sharp contrast with the experience of the prophet. It is the type of mysticism which has mainly been seized upon in the criticism which is often launched against the whole of mystical phenomena: the soul

Divine Vocation in Human Life

loses consciousness of itself in an overwhelming sense of the presence of the Oversoul in the central depths of its own being,—finds itself merged in the infinite life of the Absolute Being, and says, “Thou art Thou.” This mystic vision usually comes to the soul in reposeful mood, in passive contemplation, withdrawn from the ordinary activity of life, which it calls the world of appearance.

Take now the experience of the prophet. His vision rather comes to him from precisely this outer life of the world. It is not so much a vision born out of his own private inner life, as a vision borne to him out of this same spiritual life, writing itself in the large letters of History. His is a vision arising more immediately from the ethical plane,—a message which he discerns the hand of God writing across the sky of time, a message which he recognises men are intended by God to see. He sees it, and he feels himself compelled by God to declare it. Unlike the mystic’s vision which often glories in the fact that it really cannot utter itself (for speech is but the rude instrument of the outer, social life of the soul), the prophet’s vision conveys to him the overmastering sense that he is expressly chosen to declare it to men.

In Amos, for example, the prophet’s call was the conviction of purposive coincidence between the clarifying of his own conscience, on the one hand, and the striking of the hour of destiny in history, which is the judgment of the Divine Conscience,

Religious Intuition

on the other. Over against the word in his soul he could read the deed of God in time. "Will the lion roar in the thicket except he have caught his prey? . . . Can two in the desert walk to meet except they have made a tryst?" The images are daring. The lion's roar is the voice of the prophet, the mighty claws descending on the prey are the armies of Assyria. The urge in the prophet's soul compelling utterance, and the urge of the great movements of world-politics are the two who have met in the desert. And it is God who has set the tryst. For the urge in both cases is the pressure of the Divine. Amos' burning sentences,—to quote Principal G. Adam Smith—"reveal a Deity who is not only manifest character, but surgent and importunate feeling. Therefore, as he says in the title of his book, or as some one says for him, Amos *saw* his words. They stood out objective to himself. They were not mere sound. They glowed and burned with God."

We are here describing types of consciousness which are seldom if ever found in their purity. The mystic is not always individualistic, the greatest probably never. His vision proclaims to him that the truth of his own spiritual life is its oneness with the Absolute Life. But it is the merest step to the other side of this fact, to discover that the truth about *every* man's soul is the same as the truth about his own. And out of the resultant sense of brotherhood is sometimes born the impulse to direct his

Divine Vocation in Human Life

brethren along the way that leads back to the great Divine Deep on whose bosom we appear, "light-sparkles floating on the ether of Deity." And as for the prophet, on the other hand, the crisis in history, which has quickened his conscience to vision, has often smitten him into a mystic stillness of spirit, and a deep wondering awe. "In the year that King Uzziah died," said Isaiah, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple."

This manifest kinship of the two supreme types of religious consciousness suggests that they may somewhere coalesce in a higher unity. And some suggestions towards a correction of the usual acceptation of the meaning of the mystical consciousness may point us at length to the goal where that ultimate type of religious consciousness is to be sought.

For there is a true and a less true mysticism. Sometimes both the defenders and the detractors of mysticism have drawn the same distinction between mystical intuition on the one hand, and rational insight on the other. The one party denounces the barrenness and abstractness—to use William James' word—the "thinness" of the reasoning processes; and praises the living warmth, the richness, the inward compellingness of what they call the mystical uprush from the subliminal. Their point of view is kin with that of Rudolf Otto's recent theory of "the numinous", that in man which apprehends the Divine,—the *Mysterium*

Religious Intuition

Tremendum,—by emotions of fascination and awe which are non-rational, and indeed prior to the reasoning powers of the soul. The other party despises the subjectivity, the inarticulateness and the waywardness of this so-called mystical vision. They urge that we have no real insight except by way of logical analysis and inference.

But surely we are not shut up to these alternatives. Our choice does not lie between inarticulate faith or feeling, and barren abstraction. The truer mysticism is the insight sometimes obtained by the soul when all its rational and spiritual activity is raised to a higher plane of functioning. "Mystical intuition," says Mrs. Herman, "is not something which is isolated from the intellect. It is in fact *the action of the intellect and the will energizing God-ward under the supreme influence of Love.*" The *limen* or threshold of the soul does not all lie beneath consciousness. Contact with the unseen spirit-world by way of the sub-conscious is of more than doubtful moral value. The true realm of the Spirit is a supra-conscious world. The truer mysticism is an insight where the soul neither withdraws from the realm of reason, nor sinks down, in trance state, beneath waking consciousness, but where it rises up through and beyond the discursive processes of reasoning, and the activity of the will, and breaks across the upper threshold of consciousness to the articulate, living and immediate apprehension of Reality which is there bequeathed to it.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

A second corrective suggestion about the usual criticism of mysticism brings us back to the point from which this chapter set out. True vision is not attained by the activity of the human consciousness alone. According to the point of view maintained in these pages, there is a real and actual approach from the side of the Divine. Dr. Adolf Deissmann has recently drawn this distinction between the less true and the truer types of mysticism. The one he calls *active* mysticism, meaning thereby that which makes the effort to gain contact and union with the Divine arise from the side of the human spirit alone. The other type he calls *re-active* mysticism, in which man's part is that of a response to the Divine initiative in seeking contact with the human soul. The Christ-consciousness of St. Paul is of this order—a response to the felt approach of the Divine in the Person of the risen Spirit of Jesus Christ. But in a more general sense this is true of all the nobler forms of religious intuition. W. W. Peyton says¹ the Universe is “a great mystery which besets us and calls us into fellowship.” “Religion is the effort of the soul to make itself responsive to the clamant Spiritual World.” And mysticism, or “experienced fellowship with the Spiritual in the Universe,” is the result of “the pressure of the Infinite God upon the soul, calling for correspondence.”

And indeed in all genuine mysticism of what-

¹ *The Three Greatest Forces. I. The Incarnation.*

Religious Intuition

ever type this is recognized ultimately to be the case. Even in the purely *active* type, where union with the Absolute Spirit is sought along the *via negativa*, by abstraction from all contact with the outer world, and a subjective sinking down into the depths of one's own spirit, it is only a step, often taken, to the recognition that the whole process is of God. If God is found at the centre of one's own being, then God, the Infinite Being, is the explanation and clue to the mystery of one's own existence. God speaks in the soul of every mystic to say, "Thou would'st not seek me, had'st Thou not already found me."

The failure of this way is the failure to recognize God as not only immanent but transcendent, a failure to recognize that no genuine spiritual union with the Divine is possible unless one takes a stand on the independent being of one's own personality. There can be no union, only mergence and absorption, unless there are two wills, in some sense separate, the human and the Divine. "There is a higher and truer love," says Professor Sir Henry Jones, "than that which is sentimental, and a saner than that which is mystical,"—and he uses the word "mystical" in the purely negative sense here. "It is," he continues, "that which unites wills and leaves them standing. It is a spirit of service."¹ "Son of man," said the voice of the Spirit of revelation to the prophet Ezekiel, "stand upon thy feet and I will speak to thee."

¹ *A Faith that Inquires.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

In the end therefore it comes to this, that it is within the category of Vocation that the real clue to union with the Divine is to be found. It is here that the prophetic consciousness and the mystical find themselves coalescing in a supreme unity. When the mystical consciousness is thus made objective by a recognition that its true pathway lies along the way of positive, organized and concentrated rational activity, and that it is the response of the finite will to the pressure and solicitation of the Divine in the environing outer world of nature and history, then prophetism, which is the result of the union of individual conscience with the Infinite Conscience expressing itself in great movements in the social life of the time, is seen to be but an aspect of mysticism, in which the individual will finds its union with the Universal Being along the way of "instinct for totality."

Where we have these two types of religious experience, these two foci of religious consciousness, the mystic and the prophetic blended in a perfect harmony, we reach the supreme instance of the consciousness of Divine Vocation.

CHAPTER IV

The Utmost for the Highest

WE turn, in conclusion, to ask, Has this rung on the ladder of consciousness of Vocation ever been attained on earth? And we answer immediately, It is in Jesus of Nazareth that we find this perfect balance of soul. No one else ever reached union and communion with God at the height of the consciousness of Jesus. "On the faith of all others," says Principal D. S. Cairns,¹ "there lies some shadow of misgiving. The sense of the vastness and mystery of the world, the sense of guilt, and the want of elevation and steadiness and power in the soul of man obscure his vision. The profound veneration, the intimate love, the pure enthusiasm of Jesus for God stand alone in history, and form the only source from which this new consciousness expressed by the new name 'the Father' could have arisen." This is not the place in which to pursue an enquiry into expressions of it in the Gospel records.² Suffice it here to refer to two instances, to

¹ *Christianity and the Modern World.*

² The writer has made some attempt to do this in his book, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus.*

Divine Vocation in Human Life

show how impossible it is to eliminate it from the fabric of the life of Jesus.

The first instance shows the absolutely assured nature of Jesus' conviction, or rather apprehension, of the Fatherhood of God, a Fatherhood which had to do in a uniquely intimate way with his own life. It is the prayer in Gethsemane, "Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done." It was a moment of poignant anguish, agony, pleading for a re-directing of the Divine Plan. It was an hour of uttermost dread darkness and gloom. The whole endeavour of Christ's life seemed to be passing into extinction and nothingness. He might well have felt that no All-seeing Eye was bending over Him, directing His career, but only an empty and bottomless socket. He seemed about to be trapped in a wood by the hounds of a mocking and meaningless Fate. If ever there was an hour when the sense of the Divine Fatherhood might have faded from His soul, this was that hour. Yet all the time, as the watchers reported, the name on His lips was "Abba". And the only reason for their recalling the Aramaic word He used must be, that never before had they heard it so charged with the inexpressible pathos of a perfect trust as then.

The other instance happened a few days earlier and in almost the same locality, and it expresses in a striking and inescapable way the elevated nature

The Utmost for the Highest

of Christ's consciousness of Sonship. In the apocalyptic discourse on Olivet, He said concerning the time of the Son of man's return: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." According to Schmiedel that is one of the few sayings of Jesus that are of absolutely assured authenticity, one of the five foundation pillars by which the life of Jesus can be grounded on the bed-rock of History. And the reason the critic gives for his assertion is that no disciple or follower, no one but Christ Himself, would have dared to utter so profound a disclaimer of His own prevision. We accept the reason. And we are grateful to the critic for leaving us this word. For think, for a moment, of the place Christ here gives Himself in the counsels of God. It is above humanity, above even all the hierarchy of spiritual beings in the Unseen; it is next to the Father Himself, as the one who, of all existent beings in heaven or on earth, had the best right to know this secret, if it had been the Father's good pleasure to disclose it to anyone. And He makes this claim doubtless because of His vocation, because He knew Himself called to fulfil the rôle about whose times and seasons He was speaking to His disciples. Moreover, it is because of this unique and unshareable call that He claims, in this word also, the right to call Himself "the Son," without any added qualification.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

I

The surest fact, then, in the life of Christ was His intimacy with the Father. That name occurs in the first recorded utterance of Jesus, and in the last. His vision of God was, in the first place, a spiritual intuition, not won by retiring into the inner depths of the self, but bequeathed to a consciousness elevated to a new and sublime plane of spiritual activity, in which self was knit in adoring *rappôrt* with the beating heart of Reality. True, there are analogies, hints, momentary gleams of a similar consciousness, in mortals with outstanding gifts of spiritual insight. In our Lord it was the normal and abiding state of consciousness. He dwelt in it. All nature, all history, all human life around Him, were bathed in the living light of the Divine Presence.

But in Christ we have to note also how what we have called the prophetic consciousness blends with this inseparably, and is indeed transfigured by it. This unveiled Presence of God, which confronts and invades the soul of Jesus everywhere, looks out on Him continually from the midst of the teeming human life around Him, through all its heroisms and graces, its untried possibilities of goodness, through all its chaos and strife, its sorrow and brokenness and need, and becomes an authentic personal voice greeting Him, summoning Him to service and sacrifice. This is what distinguishes

The Utmost for the Highest

Him from the mystic, especially the mystic of the negative type. Mystics have doubtless heard the voice of God. But it is not in moments of withdrawal from the world—in intuitions born in a passive repose of the spirit—that the highest summons of God is heard.

And it is this discernment of the Presence of God in, and of the call of God through, human activities, that distinguishes the Divine voice, as heard by Christ, from the voice heard by the other great mediating personalities of history. Doubtless the poets have heard the voice of God, whispering, amid the stars and the flowers, the secrets of life and time, and have spoken these secrets as their answers to the deep longings of men. But not with an undeniable clearness and compulsion is the voice of Divine Vocation heard in the raptures of imaginative genius. Doubtless also scientists and philosophers have heard the voice of God mediating the secrets of cosmic Truth and Reality. But the summons to that service where alone the soul finds its perfect freedom is not heard with the greatest fullness in the insights and intuitions of Reason. This is only perfectly apprehended out in the arena of complete moral activity. It was at last fully heard when Jesus looked abroad on the world of human souls, when He listened to the inarticulate yearnings of the blind, aimless multitudes, the desires which were voiceless, the sorrows which were dumb, the

Divine Vocation in Human Life

diseases of soul of which men were ignorant, the burdens of guilt, fear, disappointment, weariness, the unrest whose real meaning was still dark to men. It was heard in His looking abroad on that, and letting the conscience and compassion of soul be so overborne by it that it became, as it were, all the wistfulness of God, looking out through the eyes of "that great leviathan" Humanity; and the Divine voice crying, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?—an infinite need becoming a Divine Call.

It is here that we touch the borders of the innermost secret of the Divine Personality of Jesus. We attempt sometimes to view His character in a static repose, to describe His serenity, His courage, His reserve, His self-control, His holiness, His love. And without doubt we do see in them a flawless perfection in which humanity is lifted up to partake of Divinity. Again, we can demonstrate beyond cavil the certainty, the uncloudedness and unbrokenness of His communion with God,—His awareness of the Heavenly Father's presence and well-pleasement in His life. Yet at none of these points are we satisfied that we have captured and defined that mysterious element of His Personality which constitutes Him Master and Lord, which sets Him over against our lives somehow and constrains us to worship and adore. But we do begin to come into touch with that feature of His life here in His will, His apprehension of the Divine

The Utmost for the Highest

Vocation, His passionate and perfect fulfilment of that Vocation.

For, in the first place, if ever it was true of any life, it is true of Jesus of Nazareth that His life obeyed and fulfilled a plan, which seemed to have been made, not by Him, but for Him. It is a life which we cannot so much as look at without the immediate and irresistible sense that He was all of Him design, none of Him chance ; that His life was a Divine idea worked out, a God-appointed programme gone through. And, in the second place, it was the fulfilling of the highest plan we can conceive to have been adopted by the mind of God for our humanity. It was the beginning of the consummation of the supreme and eternal Purpose of God for men. It was a demonstration of the holy, agonizing love of God in the midst of our broken humanity, in order that the union of man with God might be achieved in reconciliation. And further, it was the conscious acceptance and loyal completion of that Divine Intention, a wholehearted identification of Christ's own will with the Will of God expressed in that Purpose of Love. It is in this sense that He is still to us "The Word," the highest thought ever conceived in the mind of God for the world, uttered forth at length in time. He is the great Servant of God's own agony and sorrow, God's only Son.

Such was certainly Christ's own consciousness of

Divine Vocation in Human Life

vocation. He knew that in fulfilling the purpose of His life, His moral effort and achievement were at last identical, co-extensive with the supreme purpose of God in human history—that He was accomplishing “the utmost for the Highest.” “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Here we have a moral affinity between the Will of God and the will of Christ, which has passed almost beyond the sphere of vocation, and is merging into complete oneness with God’s mind and heart and will, merging, that is, into a consciousness which, in its infinite reaches, can be felt and experienced only by God Himself. Such an attainment, by the Grace of a Transcendent God stooping down into time, is the spiritual truth of the Incarnation. It was in the consciousness that the entire purpose of His life here was precisely God’s supreme plan in and for humanity, that Jesus became aware of His own oneness with the Father.

Further, it must now be noted that the point where the consciousness of the identity of the human and the divine is reached is also the point where complete identification with the moral ideal is achieved. Jesus is one with God in the

The Utmost for the Highest

consciousness that He is sharing the supreme effort of God for the world: He is one with God in the consciousness that the method of its attainment is the carrying out of the ultimate law of morality, the law of self-sacrifice. The Incarnation means the deification of humanity, yet also the complete humanizing of Deity in one Person.

We are in the region of paradox here. If in Christ humanity is lifted up to the height of Deity, how are we to reconcile this with the statement that the Incarnation is God's great act of self-sacrifice, if not indeed His self-abnegation of Godhead. This is just the crowning instance of the ethical problem of the relation between self-assertion and self-sacrifice. And once again it must be approached from the side of Christ's historical activity as a personal will working under the eternal law of morality. Only in thus losing oneself in sacrifice does one truly find oneself, make the true expression of oneself. Humanity in Christ consummates its Divinity in the very act of sacrificing itself *for* humanity. But more,—if God is active in History, the supreme vocation to which it is possible for God to summon an individual within History is not simply the revelation of the highest it is in man to be; it is the revelation of what is most fundamental in the character and Being of God Himself. It is God in Christ fulfilling the eternal law of morality in an act of absolute and

Divine Vocation in Human Life

unique self-sacrifice. God does not become less God in so doing. This complete self-abnegation becomes God's supreme act of self-expression, self-assertion. In becoming completely one with our humanity Christ asserted His Divinity. "His Divinity," as Dr. Denney was wont to say, "is because of, not in spite of, His humanity."

This thought, of sacrifice as a necessary part of the perfection of Godhead, has sometimes been maintained by great names in the world of speculative thought. The late Professor B. Bosanquet has argued that the self-satisfaction of the Absolute Being is achieved in self-sacrifice. "The Divine nature," he has said,¹ "does not involve stability and perfection in such a sense as to exclude activity and the general form of self-sacrifice. It is not an imperfection in the supreme Being, but an essential part of his completeness, that his nature, summing up that of all Reality, should go out into its "other" to seek the completion which in this sense alone is absolutely found. The "other" in question *can only be finite experience*; and it is in and because of this, and qualified by it, that the Divine nature maintains its infinity. And therefore it may be said that the general form of self-sacrifice—the fundamental, logical structure of Reality—is to be found here also, as it is everywhere. Not of course that the infinite Being can lose and regain its

¹ In *Mind*.

The Utmost for the Highest

perfection, but that the burden of the finite is inherently a part or rather an instrument of the self-completion of the Infinite.”² It is surely no undue straining of thought to apply all this in a special sense to the case of one particular individual within the realm of finitude.

Looking at it from the human end—from the point of view of finitude—we would remind ourselves that it is in great acts of moral self-surrender that the consciousness of man feels itself soaring above the limits of time, in which that consciousness seems, by the very act, to be merging and dissipating itself; and becoming in a sense immortal. Thus it was in the act of His death, the completion of His life of self-abnegation, that Christ at length reached the limits of human finitude and yet at the same time transcended all finitude by making it a dying *for* men.

It is at the Cross that the Christian consciousness finds what it can completely and unreservedly and adoringly call God. Meeting such an event of absolute self-sacrifice, our spiritual natures can recognise the Divinity of the Person who accomplishes it. And our act of faith, which asserts that Christ has the worth of God for us, is answered on Christ’s side by His unique and solitary self-consciousness. His claim comes home to us as co-extensive with the fulfilled purpose of His life. The

² Cf. also Nettleship on Atonement.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

one justifies the other. And the former proclaims reality for the value our religious consciousness puts upon the latter. In Christ we experience the fact that we have something more than simply a man achieving Divinity through sounding the depths of self-sacrifice : God is losing Himself in humanity through a sacrifice which is absolute self-assertion, and is thereby revealing to men His Godhead as Love coming down, dwelling with, and suffering for, men. "Its culmination in a scene in which past, present and future were gathered into one was the truth of that life. . . . Here existed for [Him] and for us the culminating instant which became eternity."¹

II

But was this consciousness of the highest Divine vocation in Jesus a delusion, a permanent hallucination, a disease of mind ? Or was it a veritable stooping down of God into the heart of our humanity ? Are there any further directions, along which an attempt may be made to justify it ? That is the question to which we would now for a moment address ourselves.

The soundest verification of the Christian conviction that God has drawn near in such a life, lies in the moral results which have accrued to the

¹ Viscount Haldane : *The Pathway ■ Reality*.

The Utmost for the Highest

world from the experience and activity of Jesus. For the Christian consciousness and claim, to have found salvation through the Life and Passion of Jesus, finds its counterpart in some of the other great world-religions. The devout Buddhist, for example, claims that he finds soul-satisfaction in pursuing the way mapped out by the Buddha, whom he does not hesitate to name Redeemer. And his faith works : it does in great measure bring peace to his soul. But several things must be taken into consideration here.

First of all, when the principles at the basis of the great world religions are compared, it is not difficult to see that Christianity surpasses them all in respect both of richness and coherency of content. To say this is not to deny that the light of Divine revelation shines, with differing degrees of clearness, through most of the other great world-faiths. There are myth-religions which arise in the infancy of a race, law-religions which belong more to a race's adolescence, and redemption-religions which come of an older and wearier period of a people's history. Myth-religions are human creations in response to a blind religious instinct, scarcely lit at all from the side of the Divine. Their gods are but glorified editions of mortals, freed from some of their limitations it is true, but subject to many of man's propensities and failings, and careless of mankind.

The earlier religion of Greece was a religion of

Divine Vocation in Human Life

this present life, the underworld of the dead being but a place of dust and helplessness. It was a religion which ended in a sense of futility and despair. The mystery-religions came as an attempt to rescue men from this. They were in a sense redemption-religions, but based on unreality, myths which could not stand before the historic fact of Christianity. The law-religions, born in great awakenings of the human conscience, were faiths met from the side of the Divine by a disclosure of Conscience in the Godhead. But they affirmed the ability of man to fulfil the moral code in his own strength alone. Sometimes, as in the religion of Egypt, law-religion rested on a system of rewards and punishments in an after-life, and the intrinsic value of this life was so far minimized. Sometimes, as in Israel, it travelled further into Divine revelation. God was seen, in psalmist and prophet, as not only Conscience but Heart, not only Righteousness but Love. Sometimes, as in Mohammedanism, where no deeper revelation was added, it ended in a blank fatalism, submission to a relentless, Almighty Will.

The law-religions were, sometimes confessedly, incomplete. But the basis of the great redemption-religions was also often inadequate. Buddhism is a religion of escape from life, a loosing from the wheel of mere appearance, and an absorption into the unconscious life of the All. Christianity

The Utmost for the Highest

rises supreme above all these forms of faith, as the religion both of life here and of life hereafter, the religion of death in life and life by death, of this present life as in part probation by service and sacrifice, and the life beyond as its explanation and goal. It is the religion which provides a power from the side of the Divine, rescuing man from sin and brokenness and despair. It offers, in its highest form, the conservation of life's great values. By the richness and coherence of its content, it proclaims the experience of Christ as the truest and fullest revelation of the Divine.

But further, we can test Christ's vision of God and God's calling of Him by the result of these in His own life. Never was the earthly life of man lived with such poise and strength, such balance and fullness of spiritual power. Never was there manifested a life of such infinite holiness and love. Men looking on all this serenity and elevation of moral character, have declared, and still declare, that even so, like Jesus, must be the character of God Himself. It is always God's good men who are God's clearest demonstration of His own existence and character. The great Unseen Power that moves behind the Universe "cannot be less noble than His own highest achievement in the world of time. The Fountain of Life must be of essentially the same nature as the purest life that ever surged up on to the earth from its perennial spring." Jesus

Divine Vocation in Human Life

is at last the Transparency, the Frankness, the bared Heart of God the Father. If it was a disease of the soul that resulted in a life of such majestic moral purity and power and beauty, then the sooner all mankind is infected with the disease the better for the world. But to set the loftiest moral attainment down to disease is to question the very foundations on which the Universe is built.

Finally, we may appeal to the abiding influence of that life, the *Gesta Christi* with which the history of mankind is lusted since His day. The principles which He taught, and by which He lived, have acted like leaven on human society, and more than one public evil,—infanticide, slavery, the cruelties of the amphitheatre, have in consequence been abolished. But we have here to point chiefly to the tens of thousands, nay, millions of human lives which the influence of Christ's life and death has raised, often from degradation and shame, to live by the power of faith in Him, nobly, purely, and with uttermost sacrifice. These are the great witness to the truth of Jesus' experience of God and of God's call to Him. If we refuse to accept such evidence, then we have only one other alternative before us, namely, that God makes use of falsehood, fraud and delusion to further the progress of mankind; which, once again, is to doubt the perfect harmony of the laws of the universe, and indeed the very existence of God Himself.

The Utmost for the Highest

But the very fact of such a life, radiating outwards in such perfection from the height of this inner centre of consciousness of God, is a sublime argument for the ultimate reality of all moral values. If Christ took His life so seriously that He defied the Cross in the name of the Supreme Purpose to which He dedicated Himself; and if the contagion of this "enthusiast of humanity" is still spreading over the world, and men everywhere bow down and worship Him, then His existence cannot have been a mere freak of Nature, made by brainless force-demons in mockery and laughter. The moral result of His life and death justifies to the hilt His claim to have indeed heard the authentic voice of the Infinite Personal Spirit by whom the Universe is sustained.

"No man," it has been said, "is ever able to justify himself in spirit; for that would mean that he had answered in every particular to God's thought of him." But the solemn and subduing yet radiant fact of the matter is, that Christ always and everywhere claimed to justify Himself. And our hearts, as we gaze on His life, bow down consentingly to say "Amen!" God is that loving response from the Unseen, to human longing, which produced Jesus. Christ is the most sacred of all God's thoughts, the love-secret of His holy, forgiving, reconciling heart, glowing out through all the veil of nature and all the chaos of human sin.

Divine Vocation in Human Life

By His perfect response to the pressure and solicitation of the Spiritual World, that Spiritual World was finding, and even now finds, perfect access to the life of humanity through Him. In His constant dwelling in the life of God, God dwelt, and evermore dwells, completely in Him. Through His perfect obedience to the Will of God, God has accomplished His supreme purpose for mankind ; and has come down all the way, completely to meet our struggling humanity. Because it was Christ's vocation to mediate God's forgiveness to men, His Passion was all the agony of the sin-bearing God. Because in Him finitude saw into the heart of the Unseen Godhead, in Him the Godhead has looked out on us from the seen. Because He alone had achieved the right to man's forfeited primacy in creation, He is now to men God's Eternal Speech, The Word, of whom all creation is speaking in dim detail. He has carried His manhood into the Godhead, and now as the Head of the Mystical Body of believers, seeks through the Eternal Spirit to incarnate the Divine in Humanity.

INDEX

- Abraham, 189
 Acceptance, Mood of, 15-18
 Acton, Lord, 160
 Aeschylus, 162
 Aesthetic Life—*see* Art, Life of
 Alexander the Great, 156
 Amos, 169, 228f
 Apollinaris, 50
 Architects, 164
 Aristocracy of Vocation, 167ff
 Arnold of Rugby, 160
 Arnold, Matthew, 20, 69, 181, 183
 Art, Life of, 39ff
 Augustine, St., 113
 Aurelius, Marcus, 158
- Bab, 166
 Bach, 164
 Balfour, Earl, 207f
 Beethoven, 164
 Bergson, 62f, 213f
 Bernard, St., 167
 Blackstone, 160
 Blake, 165
 Boehme, 168f
 Borrow, George, 119f
 Bosanquet, B., 118, 204, 244
 Bradley, F. H., 180, 183f
 Bright, John, 159
 Broken Purposes, 118
 Browning, 43, 145, 163
 Buddha, 166, 247
 Burke, 157
 Burns, 147
- Cæsar, 156
 Caird, Edward, 227
 Cairns, Principal D. S., 235
 Capitalism, 140f
 Carlyle, 162, 169, 179
 Carrol, 119
 Causes, great, 106f
 Caxton, 162
- Charlemagne, 159
 Chesterton, G. K., 33, 103, 105
 Chrysostom, 53
 Circumstance, 117f
 Clutton Brock, 72, 204, 207, 210
 Cobden, 159
 Coincidence, 85f
 Coleridge, 203
 Columbus, 162
 Commonsense, 222
 COMMONSENSE, MOODS OF, 15-26
 CONCEPTION OF VOCATION, 81-111
 Confucius, 166
 Consciousness, God's search for, 64-66
 Copernicus, 161
 CRITICISM OF VOCATION, 112-144
 Criticism, Mood of, 18-22
 Cromwell, 168
 Cyrus, 156
- Daniel, 190
 Dante, 98, 103, 119, 165
 Darwin, 161
 Davidson, John, 151
 Deborah, 155
 Degrees of value in vocation, 124ff,
 148ff
 De la Mare, Walter, 201
 Denney, Principal James, 30, 116
 Dixon, R. W., 143
 Double Vocations, 147
 Dramatists, 162
 Drummond, Henry, 122
- Eckhardt, 67, 167
 Education, 135f
 Einstein, 161
 Eliot, George, 205
 Elisha, 169
 Emerson, 155, 161
 Epictetus, 7
 Essayists, 160f
 Esther, 190

Index

- Eucken, 56f, 97, 205
Euripides, 162
Evil and vocation, 115ff
Evolution, 53ff
Explorers, 162
Ezekiel, 168, 233

Faust, 30ff., 46f
Field for life, God's search for, 59ff
Forsyth, Principal P. T., 115
Fosdick, 212
Free Vocations, 146f

Galileo, 161
Genius, 170, 223
Gideon, 190
Gladstone, 157
Goethe, 30, 67, 103, 165
Grace of God, 70ff

Haldane, Viscount, 246
Hardy, Thomas, 188
Hegel, 41f
Helmholz, 198
Henderson, 60ff
Henley, W. E., 18
Herder, 100
Herman, Mrs., 216, 226f, 231
Herrmann, W., 185f
Heteronomy of vocation, 112ff
Historians, 160
Höfding, 68
Holmes, Edmund, 216
Home, 92ff

Idealism, 181f
Illative Sense, 223
Illingworth, 51
Imagination, 151, 217
Immanence, 51ff
Incarnation, 52f, 240
Individuals, God's Search for, 64f
Insight into character, 221.
Instinct, 213f
Intellect, Life of, 33ff
Internationalism, 100f
Intuition, Religious, 212-234
 of totality, 223
Inventors, 162
Isaiah, 157

Jacks, 21, 198
Jacob, 189
James, William, 230
Jeremiah, 168
Jesus' character, 240
 consciousness of vocation, 238ff
 influence on the world, 250f
 intimacy with the Father, 235ff
Jesus of Nazareth, 167, 169, 171, 235ff
Jesus, two sayings of, 236f
Joan of Arc, St., 156
John of the Cross, St., 167
Johnson, Dr., 99
Jonah, 190
Jones, Prof. Sir Henry, 54, 55f, 57,
 112, 113, 149f, 179f, 233
Jones, Rufus, 227
Joseph, 117, 189
Joshua, 155

Kant, 161, 176ff, 203f
Keats, 117, 163
Kelvin, 161
Kingdom of heaven, 105f
 and vocation, 169f

Leonardo da Vinci, 163
Life, God's search for, 63
Lincoln, 98, 155, 157, 168.
Linnæus, 192
Lister, 160
Livingstone, 162
Lodge, Sir Oliver, 68
Lowly vocations, problem of, 124ff
Luther, 157

Maccabees, 155
MacTaggart, J. E., 104
Mahomet, 166
Marconi, 162
Martel, Charles, 156
Masaryk, 99
Masefield, John, 207
Mathematical Genius, 199
Maxwell, Clark, 161
Mazzini, 101f, 157
Michael Angelo, 163
Milton, 103
Mitchell, Chalmers, 177
Molière, 103

Index

Moralists, non-religious, 187ff
 Moral Life, 24, 45
 reformers, 157
 MORALITY TO RELIGION, FROM, 175-196
 Morris, Wm., 161f, 204
 Moses, 157, 166, 168, 190ff
 Mozart, 205
 Musset, Alfred de, 205
 Mysticism, 226ff
 the threshold, 224f
 negative, 230ff
 active and reactive, 232
 Mystics, 167
 Napoleon, 156, 168
 Nation, 94f
 Nationalism, 98ff
 Nehemiah, 155, 169
 Newman, 29.
 Non-vocational occupations, 127
 Novelists, 160
 Nuclear forces of the community, 153
 Numenius, 197
 Otto, Rudolf, 230f
 Outward conditions of Labour, 133ff
 Pain, 116f
 Painters, 163
 Pantheism, 67f, 115f, 182
 Pasteur, 160
 Patriotism, 98f
 Paul, St., 128f, 157, 171f, 190
 Perfecting of Individuals, 69
 Pericles, 157
 Peter, St., 171
 Pheidias, 163
 Philosophers, 161
 PILGRIM MAN, 27-48
 Pivotal Forces, 153
 Plato, 91, 161
 Poet and Philosopher, 42ff
 Poets, 162f
 Poincaré, 198f
 Political sagacity, 221
 Positivism, 104f
 Prophetism, 166
 Prudhon, Sully, 205f
 PYRAMID OF VOCATION, 145 172

RELIGIOUS INTUITION, 212-234
 Rembrandt, 163
 Revealers of the Divine, 154
 Revelation, 73ff, 212
 Ritschl, 146
 Rodin, 163f
 Rousseau, 160
 Royce, Prof. Josiah, 30, 108, 113, 123, 202
 Ruskin, 71, 134, 161
 Rutherford, Mark, 178
 Samuel, 190
 Sanctifying of service, 138ff
 Sartor Resartus, 179
 Saul, 169
 Schiller, 40f
 Schleiermacher, 123, 140
 Scientists, 161
 Scougal, 74
 Sculptors, 163f
 SEARCH FOR COMMUNION WITH MAN,
 God's, 49-77
 " " consciousness, God's, 64ff
 " " field for life, God's, 59ff
 " " individuals, God's, 64f
 " " life, God's, 63
 Self-government, industrial, 134f
 Seneca, 144.
 Sense Life, The, 38f
 Sense of humour, 222
 perspective and proportion, 222
 values, 222
 Senses, higher, 217ff
 Shaftesbury, 157
 Shakespeare, 162f
 Shaw, G. B., 99
 Simpson, 160
 Simpson, J. Y., 58
 Smith, Principal Sir G. A., 155
 Social Tact, 221
 Soldiers, 156
 Sophocles, 162
 Sorley, Prof. W. R., 184
 Spencer, Herbert, 56
 Spinoza, 143, 161
 Statesmen, 157
 Station and its duties, 95f
 Stewart, E., 135

Index

- Stradivarius, 142f
Struggle for existence, 91f
Suicide, 91
Sympathy, 22of
- Tell, 168
Theresa, St., 167
Thomas à Kempis, 224
Thompson, Francis, 208
Tolstoy, 160
Torch-bearers of humanity, 153f
Traherne, Thomas, 144
Türck, 170, 223
Turner, 163
- Unattained purposes, 118
Underhill, Evelyn, 224f
Uniqueness of vocation, 142f, 148
Units of society, 153
Universality of vocation, 143f, 149
UTMOST FOR THE HIGHEST, THE, 235-252
- VOCATION, THE CONCEPTION OF, 81-111
- Vocation in the New Testament, 81f, 190
Vocations, double, 147
 free, 146f
 imaginative, 162
 in the Old Testament, 189f
 intellectual, 159ff
 practical, 154ff
Voltaire, 160
- Wagner, 164
Watson, Wm., 206
Watt, 162
Watts-Dunton, 15
WAYS OF THE DIVINE APPROACH, 197-211
Wesley, John, 160
Wilberforce, 157
Wonder, Mood of, 22ff
Wordsworth, 163
World Religions, 247ff
- Zacchæus, 190
Zoroaster, 166

BT165 .R6

Robertson, James Alexander, 1880-
Divine vocation in human life.

BT
165
R6

Robertson, James Alexander, 1880-
Divine vocation in human life. New York
George H. Doran [1925]
255p. 19cm.

1. Mystical union. 2. Christian life.
I. Title.

334738

CCSC/ej

